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# Architecture as a Social Art

*A School of Visual Art in Washington, D.C.*

Rachel A. Roellke



# **Architecture as a Social Art**

*A School of Visual Art in Washington, D.C.*

**Rachel A. Roellke**

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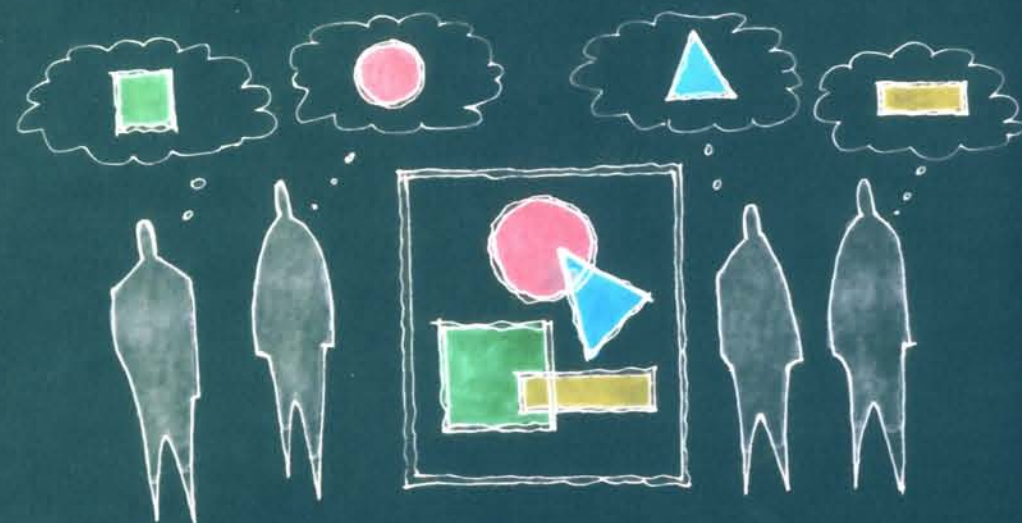


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*"Art is to community what the  
dream is to the individual."*

--Thomas Mann



## THE DREAM AND ART

*The dream. Thoughts, images, and ideas within a person's mind. A dream is personal, individual. It often conveys hopes, fears, symbols, and messages. Art too conveys hopes, fears, symbols, and messages, but it has the power to convey them to many people; to communicate with the public. Art is a public dream.*

*The individual artists discussed in this thesis had dreams—dreams that they conveyed visually through art. The Social Realists had dreams of social justice and used art to convey the idea of social change. Creators of the AIDS Quilt had individual dreams of memorializing friends and family, and community dreams of working collectively to encourage AIDS prevention. Judy Baca dreamed of expanding public art so the shared dreams of artist and audience would be conveyed through community murals.*

*People are connected through the community dreams conveyed by art. The creation of the Los Angeles murals brought together members of different communities. The AIDS quilt brings together people who have suffered a common loss, and creates a new community. The Watts Towers brought together a group of people who sought to save it from demolition; a community who thought of the towers as a symbol of their identity.*

*Poet Adrienne Rich says that the true nature of art is "the drive to connect. The dream of a common language." (Hayden, p.261) Architecture also seeks a common language to connect people. Dolores Hayden believes that the architectural dream for a common language will develop from new types of public spaces that explore the social conditions of their context resulting in the creation of American places. (Hayden, p.264)*

*This thesis will create a place where architecture as public art is the vehicle for communicating the community dream.*



## THESIS STATEMENT

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The great philosopher Aristotle said that it is speech (logos) that binds communities together. (Depew and Peters, p.3) Speech, a form of language, is a vehicle for communication, a technique of expressing ideas and exchanging information. In addition to the spoken word, language includes the signs, sounds, gestures, and images understood by a community.

While there are many forms of language, it is the process by which visual language is used as a vehicle of communication between artist and community that is explored in this thesis. The use of a common visual language makes art the ideal medium for conveying social messages to the public. The social potency of public art is established by its high visibility and accessibility to the community in addition to its subject matter. By making use of the physical environment as an outdoor gallery, the public artist takes on the role of visual spokesperson for the community. (Angelo, p.71) Architecture, as a form of public art, has a social potency as well. Architects translate social ideas into buildings. (King, p.8) Architecture is symbolic of human cultures; it is made by people and used by people, and it becomes an icon of those people. Its symbolic nature, accessibility, and public use are what make architecture a vehicle for public communication. **It is the contention of this thesis that architecture is a vehicle for communication that strengthens community identity by bringing art and the public together.**

The thesis research explores the social role of visual art within community, including its social effects, its relationship to the surrounding physical and social context, and the formal elements of visual language. Architecture, as a form of public art, can be explored under the same parameters.

The social and communicative powers of architecture will be expressed through the design of a School of Visual Art on the campus of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. The thesis project seeks to establish a unified art community while retaining the identity of individual members by communicating through architectural form. Formal elements influenced by the graphic devices used in public art including narrative, collage, distortion, and simultaneity make up the architectural language used as a vehicle of visual communication. Through the use of this formal language, the design project will create a symbol of the art school's culture, communicating its identity to the public while encouraging a sense of belonging in members of the art community.



## **GLOSSARY**

### **ART**

Visual art including drawing, painting, sculpture, graphic design, illustration, photography, and printmaking, as distinguished from the larger arts, which include writing, music, and performing arts.

### **SOCIAL ART**

Art created with the intent of communicating a social message to a public audience. While all art is social to some degree, social art is created specifically for communicative purposes. Public art, often placed outside for easy public access, and collaborative community art projects are forms of social art.

### **COMMUNITY**

A unified body of individuals characterized by a common trait or interest that distinguishes the group from the larger society.

The area itself where a common group of individuals live together.

### **SOCIETY**

A broad grouping of people who lack a distinguishable common trait comprised of a collective group of unlike communities.

The people as a whole.

### **CULTURE**

The customs and activities that constitute a lifestyle or provide a sense of local identity and heritage to a particular group of people. (Macdonald)

### **COMMUNICATION**

A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, images, or behavior. (Merriam)

### **LANGUAGE**

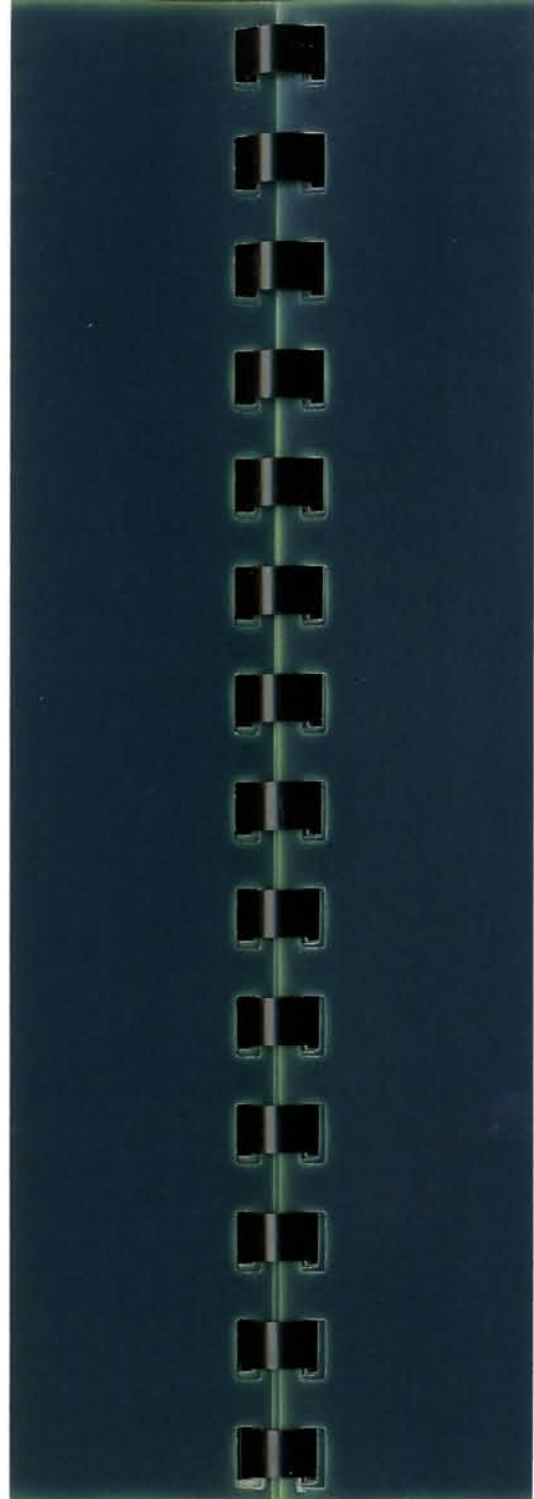
A systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings through the use of signs, sounds, gestures, images, or marks understood by a community.

(Merriam)

Language is the vehicle for communication.

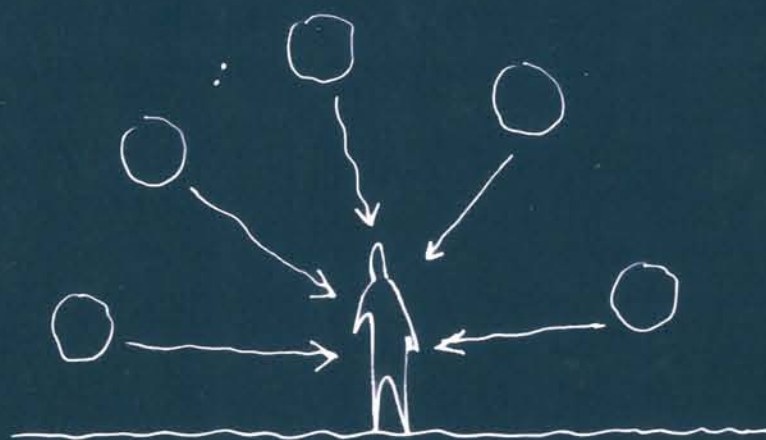
### **SOCIAL REALISM**

Art as a means of communicating social values in a critical and constructive way (Kmtspace) to represent the artist's protest against intolerable conditions that beset humanity. (Fleming, p.613)





# ART



WHAT INFLUENCES AN ARTIST'S IDEAS?

*"To serve the people is the  
highest mission and meaning  
of creative effort..."*

--Dmitri Shostakovich



## ART

### Defining Art

The dictionary defines *fine art* as “art, as painting, sculpture, or music, concerned primarily with the creation of beautiful objects.” However, this description questions both the definition of beauty and the functions of art. Duane and Sarah Preble do not address beauty in their definition of art, but describe a work of art as “an expression of an idea or experience formed with human skills through the use of a medium.” (Preble, p.1) Both of these definitions imply that art is something created or made by man but the Preble definition gives art a purpose—the expression of an idea or experience. The best description of art for this thesis, however, is found in Steve Mithen’s The Prehistory of the Mind.

**ART:** artifacts or images with symbolic meanings as a means of communication (Mithen qtd. in Rosier)

### Defining Beauty

The role of negative ideas and subject matter in art addresses the subject of ugliness in art. Images of war, poverty, and violence may not result in art that is necessarily pleasing to the eye. However, that does not make a painting or sculpture that visually explores controversial issues any less a work of art. Duane and Sarah Preble ask, “If the only function of art were to please the senses, ugliness would have no place in art. We don’t expect all works of drama or literature to be pretty or pleasant, why should we have different expectations of the visual arts?” (Preble, p.11) Art has many functions including communication, education, narration, inspiration, and transformation, all which can be successfully achieved through “ugliness” and without pleasing the senses.

These ideas directly contradict the dictionary definition of art as being concerned with the creation of beautiful objects. However, interpretation of art depends on the ability to question the conventional definitions of beauty and ugliness. (Preble, p.11) While the most common definition of *beautiful*

deals with being capable of delighting the eye (or the senses), alternative definitions include having qualities of a high order and engaging the intellectual or moral sense. (Preble, p.10) By these definitions, art that explores war, poverty, or violence (such as the art of the Social Realists) may not delight the eye, but may provoke critical thinking through the intellectual and moral senses, thereby creating an act of beauty.

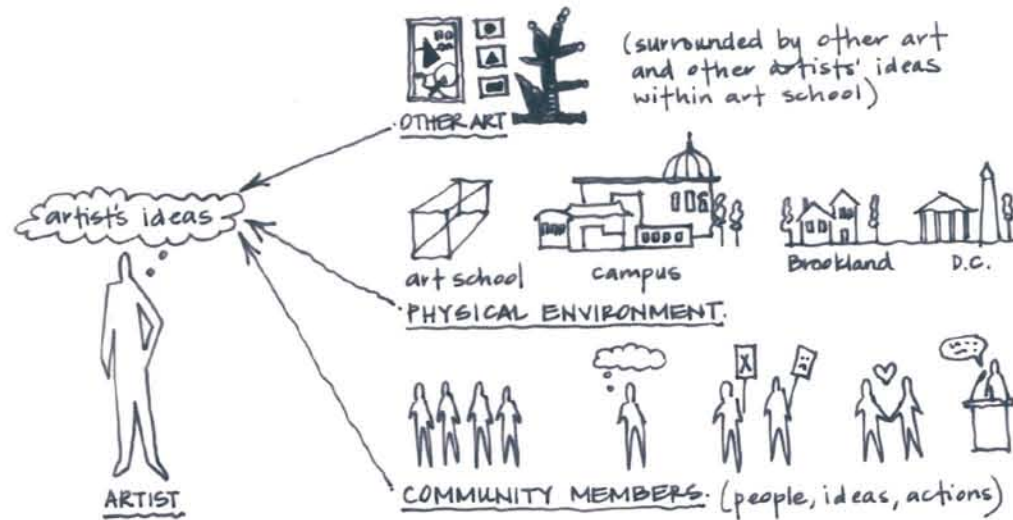
### The Functions and Purposes of Art

According to Max Kaplan, there are two theories addressing the functions of the arts. The first states that aesthetic objects exist to be admired for their own sake. The discussion on the definition of beauty and the role of ugliness in art however, indicates that there is more to art than just aesthetics. The second theory states that all art serves some type of social purpose. Kaplan argues that there can be no “pure art” because even enjoyment and emotional experience are reactions embedded in culture. (Kaplan, p.27) While most art is an overlapping condition of aesthetic and social functions (Kaplan, p.28), the social functions of art are the focus of this thesis. As quoted by Dmitri Shostakovich, “To serve the people is the highest mission and meaning of creative effort...” (Kaplan, p.30)

Art serves purposes in three major categories: personal, social, and utilitarian. (Preble, p. 21) Art generally begins with the artist’s idea, and goal to create something as a personal work for themselves or to communicate with a larger audience. The artist consciously and sub-consciously uses art to stimulate new ways of thinking and seeing in their audience and as a method of personal exploration through interpreting, expressing, distorting, narrating, and reshaping ideas and visual and formal concepts. (Thistlewood, p.3) Art is an analysis of the artist’s visual experience (Sandstrom, p.397) explored through religious, historical, social, political, and economic motives. (Thistlewood, p.2) The content of an artist’s work is affected by their community and environment, and is generally conditioned by historical tradition and social situation. (Sandstrom, p.399) Artists work from their own experiences, including the absorption of other art. (Preble, p.26) Although individual artists employ their own personal perceptions as a basis for their work (Myers, p.1), the artist must keep in mind the exchange of feelings and messages with



the viewer. (Myers, p.5) An artist's work may also seek to express the culture of a collective community and the way its members imagine, dream, think, feel, and communicate. (Fleming, p.19)



Regardless of the style, time period, or location where a piece of art was created, art reveals the basic urges and aspirations of humanity. (Fleming, p.1) Art gives physical form to human ideas, feelings, and experiences (Preble, p.1) and allows an artist or community to share their experiences with others. (Preble, p.4) Art records the past, reflects present achievements, and illustrates the future aspirations of humanity at a given time in a given place. (Fleming, p.1) According to C. Jane Austin, art developed from religious ritual which bound communities together by communicating beliefs and values. (Foster, p.11) This primary function of art, to communicate, has remained unchanged over time. While art has had many purposes and functions, there is no disputing the fact that a dialogue is created between the viewer and the work of art. (Preble, p.3) Art is the vehicle used by the artist to communicate with an audience. (Preble, p.41)

### The Social Functions of Art

When art communicates to more than a few by going beyond serving the personal needs of the artist, it performs a social function. (Preble, p.22) This social function is the best arena for illustrating the communicative purposes of art. Art uses visual language as a vehicle to communicate ideas, feelings, experiences, and social messages. (Myers, p.4) The role of the viewer is just as important as the role of the artist in the interpretation of art through the process of visual communication. Some believe that the viewer's participation in the art experience is the only one that counts because the artist is simply a tool for conveying ideas. (Myers, p.5) Furthermore, the creator's intentions are often overridden by the public which finds its own meanings. (Kaplan, p.28) The meaning one derives from an image is deeply rooted to the viewer's community and its culture. Additionally, art stimulates new ways of thinking and new ideas in the viewer; ideas that undergo transformations as they are communicated from artist to viewer, and from viewer to community. These ideas can change the cultural values of a community as they spread, and encourage social change. This process of transforming ideas stems from the ability of humans to make inferences—to join dissimilar ideas mentally to create new concepts. (Myers, p.5)

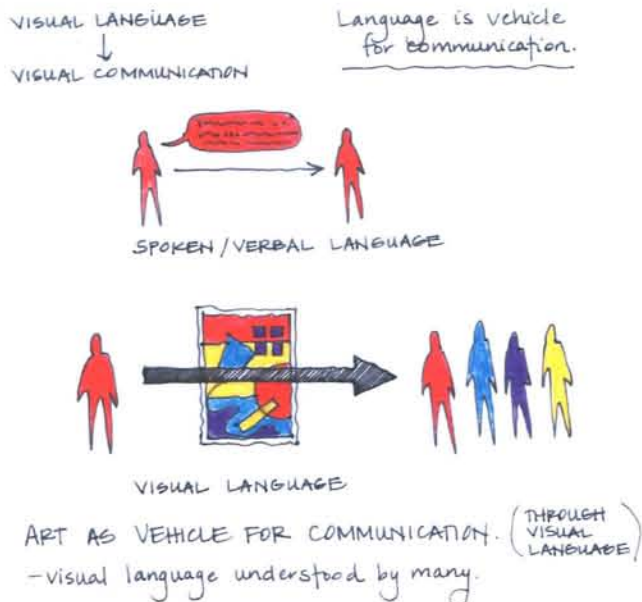
### Art as Communication

Communication is defined as a process by which knowledge is shared or information is exchanged between individuals or communities through a common system of symbols, signs, images, or behavior. It is a technique for expressing ideas effectively. Language is described as a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings through the use of signs, sounds, gestures, images, or marks understood by a community. Its function is direct communication—making others understand, do, or feel something we want them to. The process of communicating uses language as a means of conveying a visual, spoken, or written message. (Myers, p.4) According to D. Claude Levi-Strauss, art, myth, ritual, and religion are all types of languages found within society. (Foster, p.11)

Written, spoken, and visual language all require some type of structure or order to successfully communicate. In visual language, just as in written



and spoken language, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics are all important in achieving clear communication and the understanding of the audience. (Myers, p.4) Semantics is the recognition of an image, syntax is the structure and associations that result from the way images and visual clues are assembled together, and pragmatics is the shared understanding or knowledge resulting from the interconnections of the viewer to the work of art. (Myers, p.4)



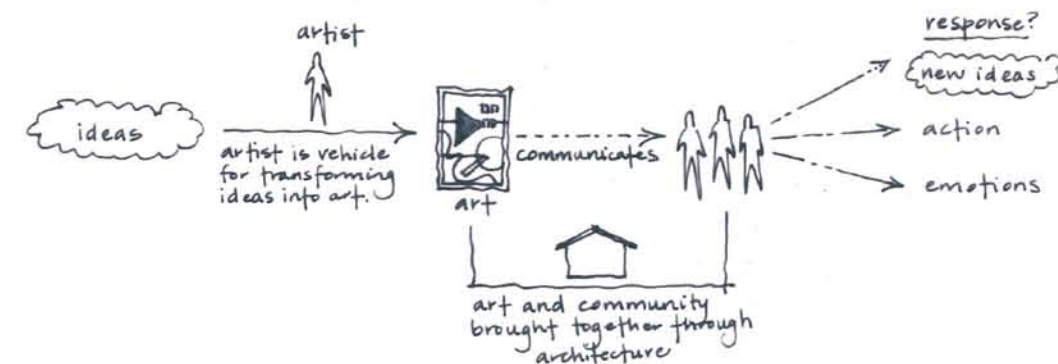
While it is easy to understand how representational art is a method of visual communication because realistic images have some type of meaning for everyone, non-representational art communicates a message from artist to viewer in a different manner. It is the abstract components of non-representational art that become recognizable symbols understood by the audience's use of recognition, association, and shared knowledge. Abstract artistic components such as point, line, shape, color, space, and motion depend on semantics, syntax, and pragmatics to achieve visual communication. (Myers, p.5) Visual forms in art evoke responses from the viewer regardless of whether they depict nameable, identifiable subjects. (Preble, p.40) The term *abstract* means to extract the essence of a thing or idea, and these ideas can be successfully transmitted from the artist to the audience through the visual communication of non-representational forms.

Visual communication also occurs through form and content. Form is literally what the viewer sees, while content is what is interpreted as the meaning of what the viewer sees. (Preble, p.40) Content is the message or meaning that the artist expresses or communicates to the viewer through art. (Preble, p.40)

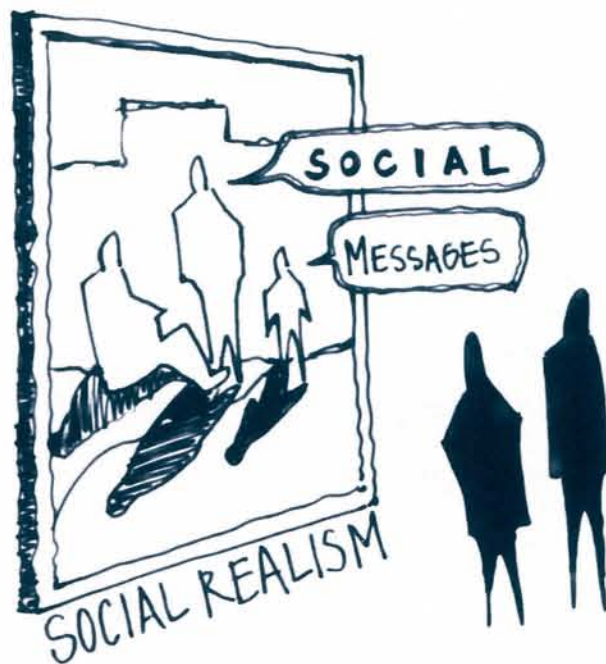
Successful use of visual language by the artist results in the communication of an idea to the viewer. Ideas communicated through art can encourage, change, inspire, educate, and have other positive affects on the audience. However, negative subject matter and even ugliness have a place within the definition of art. Issues such as war, poverty, and violence can provide the basis for constructive communication through art. (Preble, p.11) By choosing controversial ideas, the artist often hopes to use art to cause public awareness or encourage social change.

### Public and Social Art

While all art serves some social function by communicating with its audience, certain types of art are created solely for social purposes, including the work of the Social Realist and Muralist movements. Art created for social purposes is often located in public places or displayed in non-art environments to communicate with a larger audience. Architecture is a form of public art that conveys social messages as a cultural expression of its creators and users.



# SOCIAL REALISM



*"I feel it is necessary to establish  
a new kind of art, able to show  
the problems of the whole society,  
of every living being--a new  
discipline which I shall call  
social sculpture..."*

--Joseph Beuys



## SOCIAL REALISM

Social Realism is an artistic style critical of society that uses art to portray subjects such as poverty, alienation, and war with the purpose of causing social awareness and provoking social change. Social Realists used art as a language to communicate messages about social injustice to the public. The idea of Social Realism in art began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with works such as The Gleaners (1857) by Jean Francois Millet, Third Class Carriage (1863-66) by Honore Daumier and Potato Eaters (1885) by Van Gogh. These early works were fairly traditional paintings viewed in museums, unlike the large-scale publicly displayed art works used to convey social messages in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although the 19<sup>th</sup> century works of Millet, Daumier, and Van Gogh were displayed in art galleries, they communicated the plight of the lower class to the upper class museum visitor, drawing the viewer into the world of the underprivileged. Social Realism further developed as a style with the Ashcan School of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the American scene painters of the Great Depression. Many of the Social Realist painters of the Depression era got their start with the W.P.A. art programs.

Social Realism demonstrates that art does not have to be aesthetically pleasing and that content and subject matter can define art without beauty. Many Social Realists pledged to "fight the beautiful art" by creating works promoting social awareness of the ugly realities of the human condition. (Grisham) While the works of the Social Realists often caused public outrage, the style reshaped the definition of art, and often resulted in the promotion of social consciousness.

The most famous and comprehensive work of Social Realism is Pablo Picasso's Guernica, a dramatic protest against the brutality of war. The monumental painting creates a violent visual explosion of the death and terror that occurred after an air raid against the defenseless Basque town of Guernica. Picasso uses a historical subject to create visual propaganda socially protesting the victimization of humanity while successfully communicating the horror of the Spanish Civil War to the viewer. (Fleming,

Perhaps one of the most well-known Social Realists is Ben Shahn, who began painting murals for the Public Works of Art Project during the Great Depression. (Miyashiro) Shahn saw art as a means of communicating a social message (Laurier) and his large-scale narrative paintings and lesser known photographs attacked political, economic, and social issues as subject matter. (Miyashiro) Shahn communicated with society through didactic murals for public spaces, posters for government organizations, magazine illustrations, and book covers that gave visual impact to his political beliefs. (Miyashiro)

Shahn's most influential work is the narrative mosaic mural, The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti at Syracuse University. The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti illustrates the trial of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Sacco and Vanzetti were Italian anarchists executed in 1927 for murder and robbery in Massachusetts that they did not commit. (J.Curtis) Supporters of Sacco and Vanzetti believed the defendants had been judged on their radical beliefs, rather than on evidence. (Miyashiro)

Shahn became actively involved in the Sacco and Vanzetti controversy in 1925 by picketing in Boston. (Bush, p.12) After the execution, Shahn began using art as a means of social commentary to publicize the cause of Sacco and Vanzetti and to give the executed men a voice. (Miyashiro) In 1930, he painted a series of 23 gouache paintings entitled The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti and in 1932 he painted an 84" by 48" panel with the same title. (Bush, p.16) It was at this point that Shahn stopped thinking of art as an individual experience and realized the public impact a painting could have through its power in conveying a social message. (Bush, p.20)

The Sacco and Vanzetti trial had personal meaning to Ben Shahn and he used his personal feelings to influence art that was created for the public. Shahn wanted people to see his work and understand its social implications; he created art to communicate with his audience. For these reasons, Shahn did not want his work to end up in private collections which would destroy the social impact of the artwork by limiting the public audience. In addition to causing controversy, Shahn's The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti created public interest which led to an increased social awareness of the trial even



many years later. Besides the usual art public, The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti aroused surprising interest among Italian immigrants and journalists who were not ordinarily art museum visitors. (*Bush, p.22*)

In 1965, nearly 40 years after the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, Syracuse University invited Shahn to create a mural. Shahn was extremely interested in doing public art because many of his works had gone into private collections losing their social impact. (*Bush, p.23*) He revived the theme of Sacco and Vanzetti in a 60' by 12' mosaic mural installed on the east façade of the Huntington Beard Crouse building in 1967. Shahn chose this location due to its central position on campus and heavy flow of student traffic resulting in public visibility. (*Bush, p.30*) Shahn was so dedicated to communicating a social message through the mural that he sacrificed all financial gain from the project. (*Bush, p.33*)



Detail. *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti.*

# MURALISM



*"The highest, most logical, purist, and most powerful type of painting is mural painting. It is also the most disinterested, as it cannot be converted into an object of personal gain, nor can it be concealed for the benefits of a few privileged people. It is for the people. It is for everybody."*

--Jose Clemente Orozco



## MURALISM

The most common type of public art is muralism. The Muralist Movement of the 1960s began with the desire of artists to move out from museums to expand their audience and interact with the public. (Cockcroft et al. p.19) The movement was inspired by the Mexican Muralist Movement which started in the 1920s and was fueled by the ideas of the Mexican Revolution. The most well-known muralists are the three Mexican masters—Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros. (Cockcroft et al. p.241)

There are two types of murals generally created for city environments: Urban Environmentalist murals are created by commissioned artists in an abstract decorative style to improve the appearance of the city (Cockcroft et al. p.29) and Community Based murals are created by community artists and members in a figurative expressionistic style using community issues as subject matter. (Cockcroft et al. p.30) It is the Community Based murals that are a true form of social art because these murals use visual language to communicate social messages. Additionally, the process of creating murals is often a community effort.

Mural painting is a collective social activity in which community residents are the creators as well as the audience. (Cockcroft et al. p.107) Murals bring art into the community, create public interest and speak to the oppressed. (Cockcroft et al. p.xxiii) Public murals often create a sense of identity and pride within a community by creating a symbol that individuals can identify with because the murals reflect their own lives. (Cockcroft et al. p.83) Community identity is further exemplified through the ability of public art to define a sense of place. A mural that becomes symbolic of a community successfully defines the group's character to both members and outsiders. (Cockcroft et al. p.86)

While public art can encourage community pride, identity, and foster a sense of place, one mural or dozens of murals cannot create a community. In reality, there are few physical communities with strong ties between individual

members. In modern society, many people live alienated among groups of transient strangers in both suburban neighborhoods and urban apartment buildings. Therefore, a public artist does not often have a pre-existing community of people to relate to. Sue Shapiro-Kiok says that "*Community art is art that builds community.*" (Cockcroft et al. p.72) Art "building" community describes the role of public art as a catalyst not a creator. Public murals act as a catalyst to make the community stronger and more visible by becoming a vehicle for redefining common values. Ignored or suppressed history, groups, and ideas often regain value through public murals encouraging a new bond between individuals that can result in new relationships and a new sense of belonging and community. (Cockcroft et al. p.73)

In addition to its symbolic value as community art, Muralism is a unique artistic style with distinguishable formal qualities. Almost all murals use simplified graphic forms and a flat style for high legibility and graphic impact. (Cockcroft et al. p.255) Human figures are common subjects although abstract elements are also used. (Cockcroft et al. p.251) Artistic styles such as Cubism and Surrealism are commonly used in Muralism often to distort and exaggerate the subject matter. Comics and cartoons along with poster-style art making use of floating forms, black outlines, and pure flat color are also frequently featured in murals. (Cockcroft et al. p.255)

Besides the overall large size of a mural, scale is addressed as a formal element within Muralism. Because murals are generally viewed from below, figures located higher on the wall must increase in size to account for the viewer's perspective. (Cockcroft et al. p.245) Some murals use collage and montage to create overlapping forms that vary and shift in scale for visual effect. (Cockcroft et al. p.250)

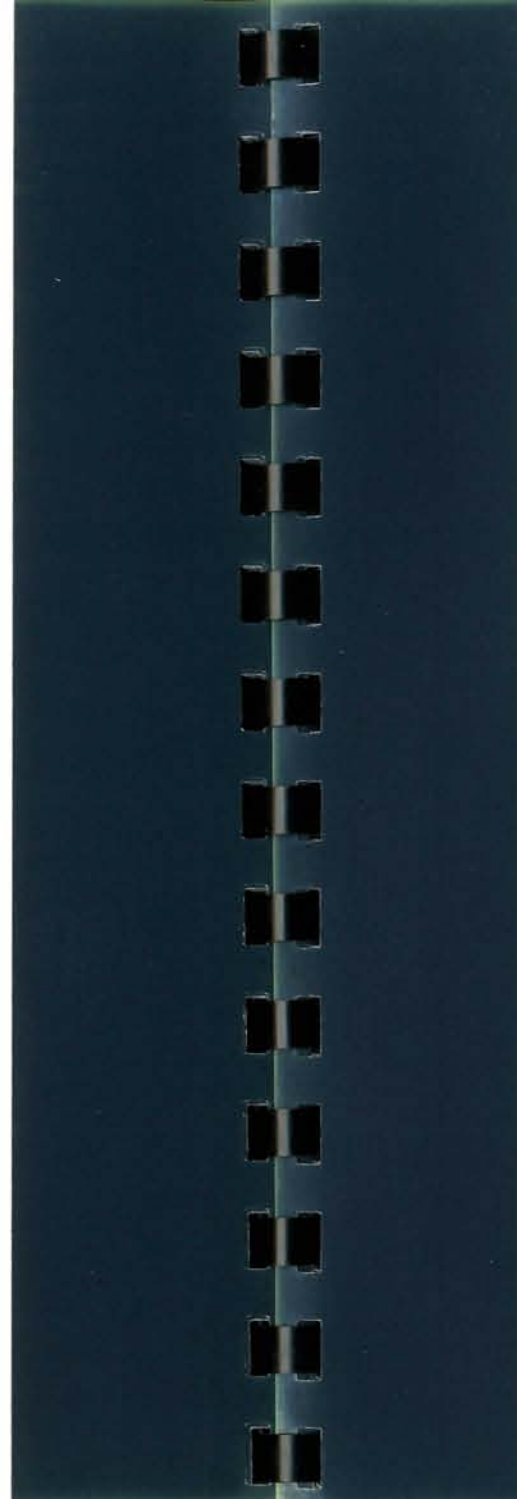
Perspective and space are important graphic devices in the Muralist style. Murals are often painted using multiple or polyangular perspectives. (Cockcroft et al. p.242) Perspective is also used to draw the viewer into the mural, eliminating the flatness of the mural's surface by creating the illusion of three-dimensional space. The use of perspective in outdoor murals is challenging due to the appearance of the mural wall as a flat plane within a





surrounding open space. Photo-realistic outdoor murals attempt to create an illusion of continuing the audience's space by eliminating the architectural quality of the wall's surface. Indoor murals are painted to extend the interior space occupied by the viewer. The use of perspective in murals is also exemplified through the distortions created by the viewer's angle of vision. (*Cockcroft et al. p.245*) Some murals completely ignore perspective all together using the flatness of the wall to further exaggerate the use of bold flat two-dimensional forms within the artwork.

The importance of a mural's relationship with its architectural, environmental, and social context (*Cockcroft et al. p.238*) is another trait that distinguishes muralism from traditional easel paintings that are generally created without considering a specific site for display. Murals are wedded to architecture because they are generally painted on a building's façade or other exterior man-made surface. While many murals attempt to disguise the architectural quality of the surface, muralists must take architectural elements into consideration and use them to complement their design. The surface texture of the wall determines the amount of detail that can be used and affects the reading of the mural. While a concrete wall can be concealed, a brick surface's texture must be integrated into the mural's design. The use of rhythmic horizontal and vertical forms in muralism often relate to the horizontal format, vertical surface, and architectural function of the wall as a structural element. Surrounding buildings, direction of sunlight, and elements such as windows and fire escapes must also be considered in murals that have a successful relationship with their surrounding architectural and environmental context. (*Cockcroft et al. p.239*)





# COMMUNITY



COMMUNITIES  
WITHIN  
BUILDING

(building houses  
communities)  
unifies



BUILDING  
WITHIN  
COMMUNITY

(building as  
part of  
larger whole)



building creates  
community?



*"Society is based on the  
assumption that everyone is  
alike and no one is alive."*

--Hugh Kingsmill



## COMMUNITY

The words community, society, and culture have varying definitions among sociologists, anthropologists, and architects. While these terms are difficult to define on their own, distinguishing the differences between them is even more challenging.

A *community* can be defined by aspects of commonality that exist between people. (Macdonald) It is an entity to which people belong; a group identity defined by people who share common beliefs, have a common origin, share common experiences, or live in a common location. (Macdonald) A community can be the actual group of people defined by a common trait, or the common geographic area where the group lives or works. The key word that defines the concept of community is *common*. Whether it be a common interest, a common history, a common religion, a common profession, or common social, economic, or political interests, some degree of commonality must exist to establish a community and distinguish it from the broader abstraction of society. Several communities may exist within a larger community, and many unrelated communities make up society. The concept of community is important in establishing both group and individual identity and a sense of belonging. Community is where one obtains their most fundamental social experiences and is where one acquires culture (Macdonald) by absorbing or challenging the traditions and values of their community. For a group to succeed as a community, individuals should exhibit shared values, participation in a shared way of life, identification with the group, and or mutual recognition. (Mason, p.19) Communities are held together by communication. (Depew and Peters, p.3)

While a strong sense of community is generally considered positive, this is not to disregard the negative concepts associated with community. There are three major sources of disvalue in community relevant to this thesis. The first is that communal relations inevitably suppress or deny individual differences. (Mason, p.56) A community based on a common race, religion, political view, etc. may ignore all the other traits that individuals have that

make them different from one another. However, this is why individuals relate to more than one community. People are members of multiple and overlapping communities, but it is the shared common trait that gives a person a sense of belonging within each community. Methods of communication and self-expression such as art allow individual members to express their unique differences and identities within the community.

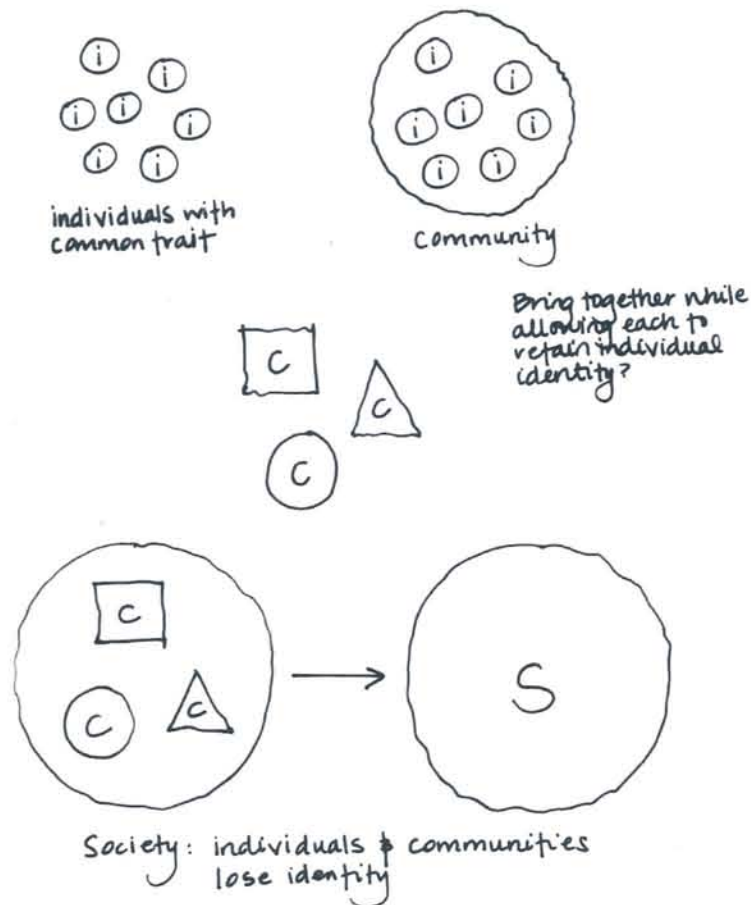
Secondly, the concept of community can be alienating because to establish community belonging, some must not belong. Communities are formed from groups of people with a common trait causing individuals who do not share this trait to be left out. However, it is healthy, normal, and instinctual for humans to seek out groups with similar traits to their own because of the human desire to belong and identify with others. (Mason, p.59)

Thirdly, the existence of different communities can cause intercommunal conflict. (Mason, p.56) Groups of people linked together through a common trait are further distinguished from communities with different religious, ethnic, national, moral, and linguistic traits. (Mason, p.1) It is human nature to make comparative judgments to distinguish one community from another, and these comparisons can lead to the de-valuation of other groups even if they respect one another in principle. (Mason, p.59) There is a fine line between community pride resulting in a positive sense of belonging and causing feelings of animosity toward other communities. Andrew Mason argues however, that patriotic identification is valuable to communities in encouraging citizens to identify with the group. (Mason, p.3)

*Society* is a broader grouping of people than those that constitute a community. Groups of people that obtain identity as a community through a common race, profession, age, gender, religion, education, interest, belief, neighborhood, or ethnic background, collectively form the broad grouping of society. According to a quote by Hugh Kingsmill, "*Society is based on the assumption that everyone is alike and no one is alive.*" This quote further distinguishes community from society by emphasizing the fact that society fails to recognize the individual communities and members with distinct and varying traits that combine to form it. Society fails to acknowledge the



differences between people and communities and destroys the identity that communities strive to establish through their culture. The vagueness that the term *society* implies further illustrates the need for communities to establish a unique identity expressed through religion, anthropology, science, technology, humanities, social sciences, the natural and built environment, the media, the arts, sporting and recreational activity, and community events. According to Andrew Mason, communities are what prevent alienation. (Mason, p.39) Anthropologist Sol Tax strengthens this argument by stating that communities form themselves in response to an increasingly anonymous larger society. (Tax, preface) In architecture, the idea that society consists of communities was introduced to the European modernists by Tonnies. (Forty, p.105)



*Culture* is the means by which a community's identity is expressed, and is defined as all the customs and activities that constitute a lifestyle or provide a sense of local identity and heritage to a particular group of people. (Macdonald) Culture includes the history, heritage, language, symbols, ideas, images, values, ways of life, and aspirations of a community. (Macdonald) Culture is the vehicle a community uses to establish identity within society.

The sociological definition of culture created by the 1982 Second World Conference on Cultural Policy in New Mexico states:

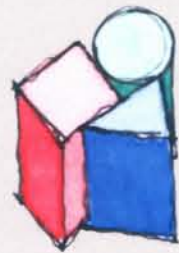
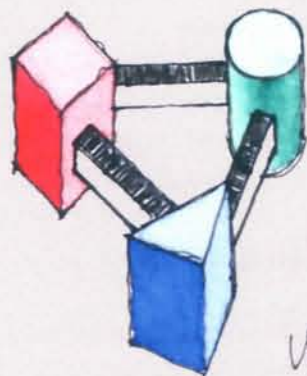
*"Culture ought to be considered today as the collection of distinctive traits, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective, which characterize a society or social group. It comprises, besides arts and letters, modes of life, human rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs."* (Macdonald)

The concepts of community and society have blurred boundaries and varying definitions. It is difficult to distinguish how many concepts of community, which traits, and how closely associated individual members must be to distinguish a group as a community. Anthropologists, sociologists, and architects, all have different definitions for communities and societies, and varying standards for differentiating them from one another. To further complicate the argument, communities can overlap, exhibit nested conditions, and occur simultaneously. (Mason, p.22)

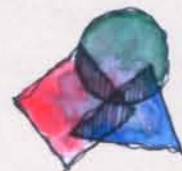
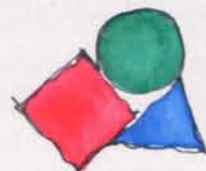
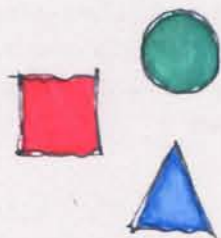
Regardless of the definitions of community and society, the loss of a group's identity within a larger whole is to be avoided. The thesis design problem will explore architecture as a means of encouraging a group's unity while retaining its individual identity.



## COMMUNITY IDENTITY: UNITY VS. INDIVIDUALITY



UNITY WHILE RETAINING INDIVIDUALITY



three ideas ~~~~~ collaged together ~~~~~ overlap

*"...How does the whole acquire significance in relation to the smallest part and in what way does the whole become a cell of the larger community?"*

--Arthur Korn



## COMMUNITY IDENTITY: UNITY VS. INDIVIDUALITY

The research presented in this paper argues the importance of both unity and individuality in establishing successful community relationships. While these are seemingly contradictory concepts, both are important in creating community identity, and they can successfully function together.

Unity is what brings people together to form a community. It is responsible for a community functioning as one and protecting the group's common interests. Unity encourages a sense of belonging, establishes an identity for the collective group, and fosters civic pride. Unity is also responsible for bringing multiple groups together which encourages intercommunal relations and respect. Unity results from communication between individuals through spoken, written, and visual language.

Individuality is important to both the group and the members that make up the group. Individuality distinguishes the community's identity from other groups. Individual members of a community can retain their identities within a unified group through communication and other methods of self-expression such as art.

The concepts of unity and individuality are exemplified through public art. Community art can bring people together using visual language as a vehicle of communication between individuals. Individual identity is retained, however, through the audience each interpreting and experiencing the art individually. Individual artists express their identity through their art.

Some argue that the concept of unity is repressive. Despite the benefits of unity established by public art messages in defining and maintaining communities, some types of art do use unification to suppress individuality. There is a fine line between the social messages of the Social Realists and the propagandist messages of the Socialist Realists in Russia (Foster, p.9) who followed the ideas of Karl Marx. While Social Realism encouraged public awareness to protest social injustice, Socialist Realism used art as

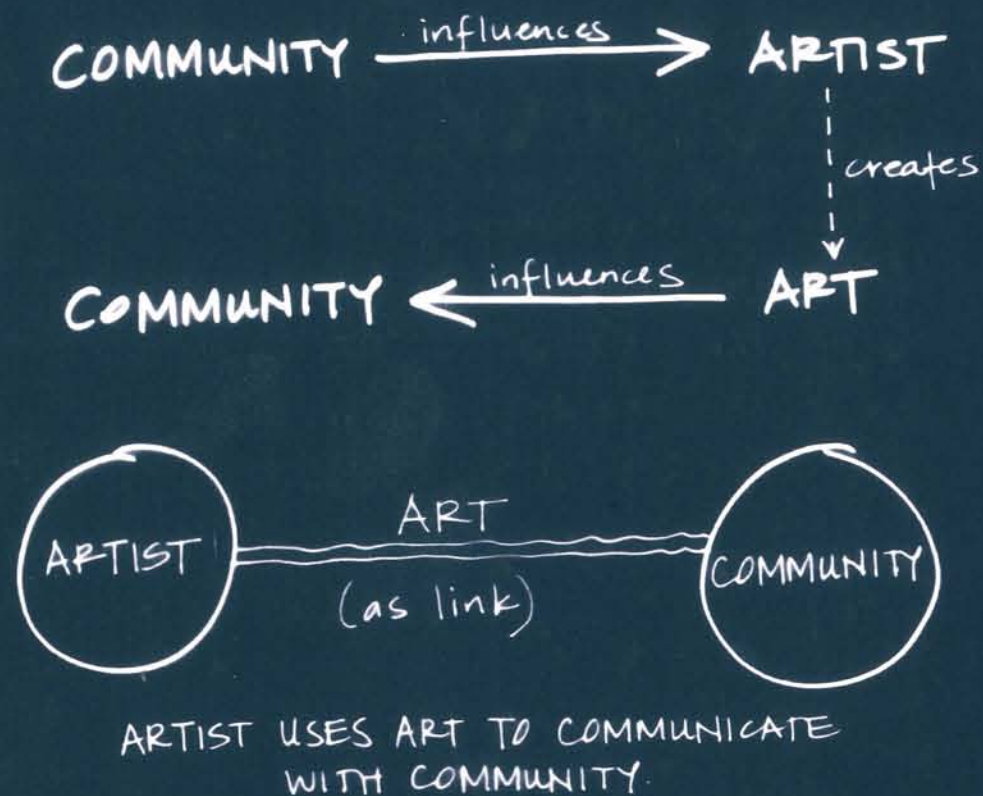
an instrument of social control to educate the masses in the spirit of Socialism. (Foster, p. 15)

The negative connotation of unity in art can be contradicted by a quote from Joseph Beuys, who said, "Art is the only power to free humankind from repression." (Wines, p.29) Most art is a vehicle for individual expression, and the unification of people that occurs through art is rarely repressive. Unity should be thought of as bring different people together, not making them the same or eliminating their differences. Stephen Covey expresses it best when describing the ideal community as, "**One Mind: Purpose, Mission, and Unity, not Uniformity; Oneness, not Sameness.**" (Covey, p.55)





## ART WITHIN COMMUNITY



*"People are now realizing that public art is essential because it is relevant to each of them. Art is a universal language, destroying the barriers that stand so firm before man."*

--William Walker



## ART WITHIN COMMUNITY

### ***The Effect of Community on Art***

While visual art is an expressive tool for artists to convey their personal feelings, interpretations, convictions, and experiences, art performs a social function when it extends beyond serving the personal needs of the artist and communicates to a larger group. (*Preble, p.22*) Some pieces of art may simply become popular over time and their messages well-recognized by society, while others are created with the intent to communicate within a community and promote social change. Other art works are created as community projects by multiple community members rather than a single artist, to convey public social messages. In some cultures, the creation of art is a community process, such as the Navajo sand painting ceremony. (*Preble, p.4*) All of these examples are types of social art—art that over time establishes symbolic social meaning to a community, or art that was created for or by a community.

Cultural identity and the expression of cultural values in communities has long been the concern of artists throughout history. (*Macdonald*) Because art is visual, it can be understood by both literate and non-literate societies, and its powerful statements have been used to impart information to a broad spectrum of people. (*Preble, p.23*) By transcending verbal language, visual art provides a common method used by people of many nations and communities to understand one another. (*Preble, p.23*) As an art piece establishes widening circles of appreciation, images become symbolic or meaningful to certain communities. (*Thistlewood, p.9*) These images may become agents of group identification or may create conceptual bonds between individuals and communities as recognition of the images increases. (*Thistlewood, p.10*) One example of this is the spread of Christianity as a result of the recognition of religious symbols by larger and larger groups to form a Christian community. Another example is folk art. Folk art is created by common people who are not trained as artists, with the purpose of creating an art object to express culture or narrate a story. Folk art, such as quilting, is often the collaborative effort of a whole community or social group. Folk

art objects, styles, and techniques are often passed down from generation to generation as a symbol of the community's culture and traditions.

The artist's physical environment, the groups of people they interact with, and the ideas and cultural values of communities they encounter contribute to and influence the subject matter, social messages, and stylistic tendencies of the art they produce. Artists are inspired by ideas and issues occurring in communities including religious themes, social problems such as crime or hate, politics, history, culture, moral and ethical values, ethnic groups, imagery from a physical environment including nature and architecture, and relationships between communities and community members. Artists portray positive themes to instill feelings of civic pride or racial harmony and also explore negative subject matter such as crime or racism with the purpose of causing awareness or encouraging social change. Artists explore controversial issues affecting communities and use art as a way of sharing their views or to shape and influence the views of others. Artists often speak for larger groups by visually expressing the ideas of many community members.

### ***The Effect of Art on Community***

Communities, as both groups of people and as physical environments, influence artists, but art also has a significant and often undefined role within communities. Public art works in particular can have recognizable educational, economic, aesthetic, and especially social benefits within communities.

Aesthetically, community art works to revitalize public places. Sculpture gardens can revive park spaces, monuments can give meaning to town squares, and murals can revive the sides of run-down buildings or unsightly man-made drainage channels. The creation of aesthetically-pleasing spaces within a community can revitalize the community's physical environment by triggering urban renewal. Public art becomes a catalyst for economic growth when the revitalization of the city leads to an increase in property values. The installation of public art works can draw more people into a community through tourism and new residents which increases the economic impact by



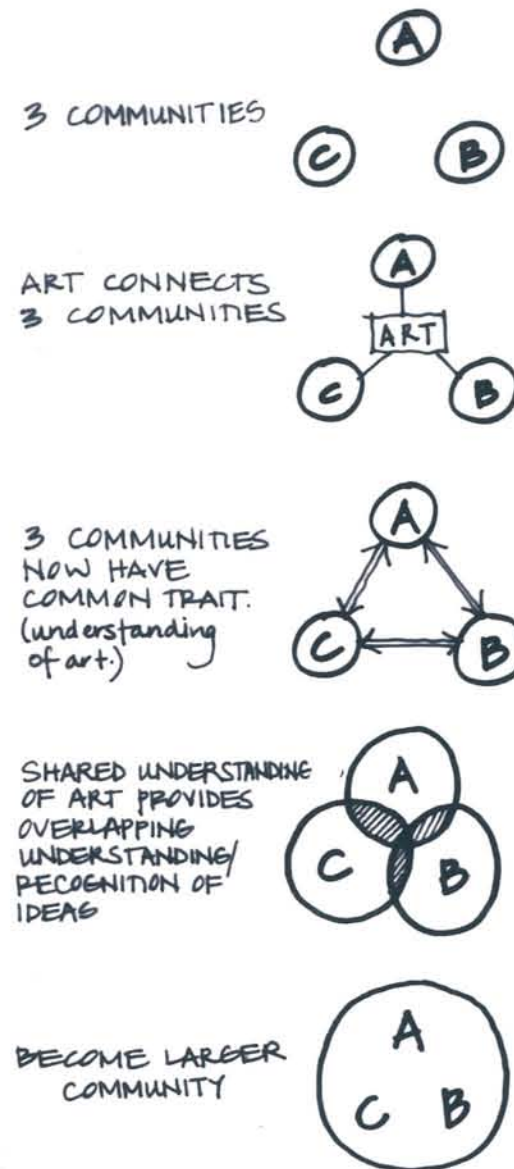
bringing money into the community. The added appreciation of art can contribute to the establishment of community art galleries and art schools which can result in additional economic benefits through the creation of new jobs and expansion of the tourism industry.

Despite these economic and aesthetic benefits, the most profound impact of community art is the social transformations that can result from public art projects. A piece of art can give a community identity, whether it be the recognition of a neighborhood, or a group of people within a larger community such as an ethnic or religious group. Community identity can encourage civic and cultural pride, and the art becomes a symbol or icon of the community that over time becomes recognizable to other communities. A community that has an identity to both itself as an established group and to outside groups can promote its own growth and development as a community. Art creates a sense of place and belonging for the community, which encourages expression of new culture, affirms community values, and works toward a community's aspirations by encouraging social change.

The social messages conveyed through public art encourage critical thinking, new ideas, and awareness of social issues. Public art can also educate about the history of a community. The messages expressed through art can cause controversy and result in public outrage.

Community art attempts to bring art to all members of a community through both the creation and experience of a piece of art. Public art projects provide an activity for community members to participate in, teach art skills, and provide the opportunity to visually communicate the ideas of a community through art. The creation of public art by community members encourages community relations and teamwork, which strengthens a sense of community and identity through civic unity. A community that has respect for itself is more likely to respect other communities, so public art can foster ideas such as cross-cultural understanding which can have a dramatic impact on social issues such as lowering crime rates.

## CONNECTION OF GROUPS THROUGH ART (RECOGNITION OF ART ~ SUBJECTS, SYMBOLS, IDEAS)





## COMMUNITY ART PROJECTS

The importance of art within a community is apparent in community art centers and community art projects around the world throughout history. These projects seek to better their communities through public participation in creating public art. Art centers and community art projects attempt to bring art to all members of their community (through either actively creating or experiencing art), communicate with and educate society by addressing social issues, bring people from different social groups together, establish an identity for their community, and bring art into public places.

### ***Works Progress Administration***

Art is recognized as such an important part of communities and American society that there are government agencies whose sole purpose is to encourage and fund community art projects. Even during the dark and trying times of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized the need for community art and his administration encouraged and increased the production of art while employing starving artists of the 1930s through the Works Progress Administration's (W.P.A.) Public Works of Art Project (P.W.A.P.). Created in 1933, the Public Works of Art Project employed 3,600 artists to create murals and sculptures for public buildings such as schools, park fieldhouses, colleges, hospitals, and government buildings. (*Lorance*) The P.W.A.P. was the first art project sponsored by the Federal Government (*Bing*), and it proved that art was an important part of the W.P.A.'s mission to improve public facilities. In 1935, the P.W.A.P. was replaced by the Federal Art Project (F.A.P.), which hired 6,000 people to work in creating art, art education, and art research. (*Bing*) The F.A.P. produced over 225,000 easel paintings, murals, sculptures, silk-screen prints, posters, illustrations, and propaganda for the American people. (*Bing*) The government after World War II recognized that participation in the arts encouraged social identification and cohesion and created the resources to take art experiences into factories, schools, and community halls. (*Thistlewood, p.4*)

The Federal Government's art programs started by Roosevelt during the Depression were the building blocks for establishing the importance and prominence of community art in United States history. The Federal Art Project's Index of American Design documented the nation's history through 20,000 photographs of American art, sculpture, painting, and crafts, resulting in the popularization of folk art in the United States. (*Bing*) Hundreds of community art centers were also established during this time, many of which are still in operation. (*Bing*)

### ***Watts Towers***

An important piece of folk art, which is now an art center, is the Watts Towers in Los Angeles, California, created and constructed by Simon Rodia. From 1921 to 1954, Rodia, an Italian immigrant, constructed eight towers ranging in height from 40-100 feet in the Watts ghetto. The towers were constructed of steel and concrete, and decorated with mosaics of broken tiles, stones, soda bottles, seashells, colored glass, and bottle caps. (*Arcspace*) Once considered an eyesore and threatened with destruction, the towers are now a sculptural expression of the enduring spirit of mankind (*Arcspace*) and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (*Cross et al.*) Originally conceived of as a community center by Rodia, the Watts Towers are now an adored symbol of the Watts community. The towers were taken over by a community group and currently operate as the Watts Towers Art Center offering art classes, exhibitions, and music and dance performances for community children and adults. (*Wattstowers*) Through the symbolic meaning created by a piece of folk art, the impoverished ghetto of Watts, California has piece of art that both symbolically gives the community identity and programmatically seeks to establish the importance of a community art center.

### ***AIDS Quilt***

Quilt-making is one of the best examples of folk art that creates a sense of community. Sewing a quilt is often a collaborative effort that brings family and friends together. The culture of the group creating the quilt is expressed during the creative process and in the final product through the stories and memories that are shared. Quilt-making itself is a social art and a process that fosters a sense of community.



Started in 1987, the AIDS Memorial Quilt is the largest ongoing community arts project in the world. The quilt is comprised of over 44,000 panels memorializing the lives of AIDS victims. As a large-scale community project, the AIDS Quilt has brought together a community of friends and family who have lost a loved one to AIDS. In addition to creating a community of supportive family members and friends, as a community art project, the AIDS quilt is a memorial, and a tool for education, healing, and AIDS awareness, along with a being a public work of art. Its strong social message illustrates the enormity of the AIDS epidemic and has reached millions around the world. (*Aidsquilt*)

The success of the AIDS Quilt as visual communication hinges on several aspects that set it apart from the "high art" displayed in museums and galleries. The primary difference is the quilt's public accessibility. (*Crichton, p.287*) Rather than being displayed in a museum or gallery, the AIDS Quilt is displayed in non-art environments such as convention centers, gymnasiums, and the Capitol Mall to reach a larger, non-art public audience. (*Crichton, p.289*)

Secondly, the AIDS Quilt differs from more traditional art forms due to the large collaborative effort in making it. People are interested in the quilt because they are the artists and they understand its connection to daily life unlike the museum art that is promoted by critics, curators, and art historians. (*Crichton, p.289*) The quilt metaphorically stitches together the lives of many—the people who made it, the people who are memorialized in it, and the people who come to see it. The group effort encourages people's enthusiasm about art through participation and exemplifies the healing nature of creating art. In an artwork like the AIDS Quilt, the process of making it is equally as important as the finished product. (*Crichton, p.291*)

Thirdly, the Quilt's effectiveness is dependent on its massive scale. Its scale and visibility help the quilt to communicate beyond the community that created it to other communities. (*Crichton, p.292*) The Quilt being displayed in its entirety is important in achieving its affect as a monumental piece of art, its power of communication occurring as people walk among the squares and physically

become part of the Quilt, feeling small in comparison to the whole. (*Crichton, p.293*)

The AIDS Quilt exemplifies relationships of individual to community; part to whole. Each quilt panel represents an individual person; collectively the Quilt symbolizes all those lost to AIDS, and the enormity of the disease. In addition to its individual personal meanings to the people who created the panels, as public art the individual's identity is less important than the overall communicatory purposes of the Quilt within the community. (*Crichton, p.291*)

As with most social art, the AIDS Quilt uses symbolism and narration to communicate with its audience. The Quilt itself is a symbol of American culture. (*Crichton, p.292*) Each individual biographical panel narrates the life of a person lost to AIDS. In addition to fabric, recycled materials and found objects are used to symbolize an AIDS victim's life, creating an overall collage of materials, colors, people, symbols, and memories. The grid pattern of the Quilt is a symbol for the inclusiveness and equality represented by the Quilt. (*Crichton, p.292*) Each individual 3' by 6' panel approximates the size of a human body, the overall Quilt becoming a symbolic "cemetery" of memories that seeks to reveal rather than bury the past.

### ***Social and Public Art Resource Center***

One of the best examples of community arts organizations with some of the largest community art projects in the world is the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) of Venice, California. SPARC was founded in 1976 by Judith Baca, Donna Deitch, and Christina Schlesinger with the goal of working in public art with the community to encourage social change. (*Neumaier, p.70*) SPARC has since created thousands of murals throughout Los Angeles through a collaboration between local artists and community members resulting in public art works which developed from within the community. SPARC's work acts as a vehicle for the betterment of community through a participatory process of creating public art that addresses social issues, fosters cross-cultural understanding, promotes civic dialogue, and reflects the lives of America's diverse ethnic populations, women, working people, youth, and the elderly. (*SPARC*)



SPARC was originally founded on the ideas that art is for everyone, that process in addition to product is important in art work, that art should be displayed in places where people live and work, that all Americans can be participants in the collaborative process of art-making, and that the arts can have a transformative impact on modern social problems. The murals created by SPARC have allowed individual communities to find their voice and give it public expression through socially-responsible art-making. These works have succeed in breaking down both real and perceived barriers between communities, and have resulted in public interaction between varying social groups through conveying social messages. (SPARC)

The success of SPARC's community murals as public art in Los Angeles is dependent on the leadership of muralist Judy Baca. Early in her career, Baca began using art as a narrative solution to issues that affected her. While teaching high school art, she discovered the power of scale transformation in changing a viewer's perception of art. (Neumaier, p.65) These concepts, combined with the ideas of the Social Realists such as Ben Shahn and the themes of community art projects such as the AIDS Quilt form the epitome of Baca's work with SPARC.

Like Shahn, Judy Baca wanted to create art that would not go in a museum or be purchased which would limit access to it, so she sought to locate her works in public places. The use of social injustice and community themes as subject matter is also similar to the work of Ben Shahn and the Social Realists. Baca's sole purpose in creating art was to communicate with the audience, as she says she makes art for the public rather than for personal reasons. (Neumaier, p.65) Judy Baca truly believes that art is for the people.

Similar to the AIDS Quilt, the SPARC murals are large-scale collaborative works created by community members. The collective effort gives the public the opportunity to become involved in the art-making process by working in a multi-ethnic situation that demonstrates how people are connected to one another through portrayal of overlapping cultural themes. (Neumaier, p.68)

The collective effort of creating the murals demonstrates how the process is perhaps more important than the finished work itself because it is through working together that community relations are formed. In this way, public murals become conceptual art as the major concept is the community process rather than the actual subject matter of the mural. (Neumaier, p.73)

Adhering firmly to the ideas of community participation and youth involvement in the creation of public art projects, SPARC's murals have become reality through the hard work of thousands of at-risk youths in Los Angeles working under Baca. The founding and most famous work of SPARC is its half mile long epic mural of the history of Los Angeles, called The Great Wall. (Berbeo, "Divide") The Great Wall project was painted from 1975 to 1983, transforming the Tujunga Wash drainage channel into the world's longest mural. (Berbeo, "Divide") The project was conceived of not only to beautify the city, but to rehabilitate hundreds of delinquent youths. (Berbeo, "Divide") Since then, SPARC has changed the lives of thousands of inner-city teenagers involved in gangs, drug dealing, and crime, through participation in community mural painting which brought kids together from diverse environments and taught them ethnic and civic pride. (Berbeo, "Artists") The Great Wall mural has become an important part of the city's identity (Berbeo, "Artists") and a monument to interracial harmony in America. (Gurza) With over 2,000 murals in Los Angeles, the city is known as the mural capital of the world (Holliday), and through the creation of community murals, SPARC has not only given identity to the entire city through public art, but has transformed physical environments, encouraged communication between communities, addressed social issues, impacted social transformation, and given a voice to individual community members through art.



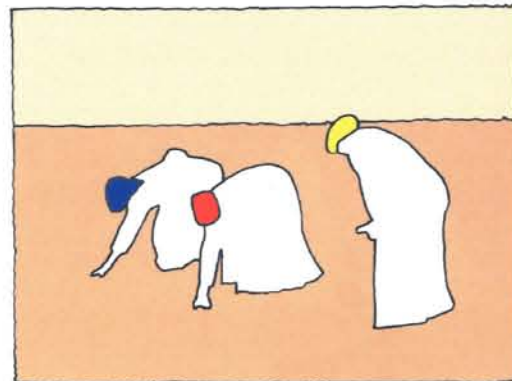
## ART PRECEDENTS: FORMAL ANALYSIS

In addition to their common social themes, the artistic works analyzed in this thesis have common formal elements despite the wide range of time periods, styles, locations, and conditions in which they were created.

As early works that influenced Social Realism, Millet's The Gleaners, Daumier's Third Class Carriage, and Van Gogh's Potato Eaters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century contain many similar characteristics. All three are fairly traditional oil-on-canvas paintings, relatively small in size in comparison to the social art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and make use of a fairly monochromatic color scheme of brown and gold earth tones.

### ***The Gleaners***

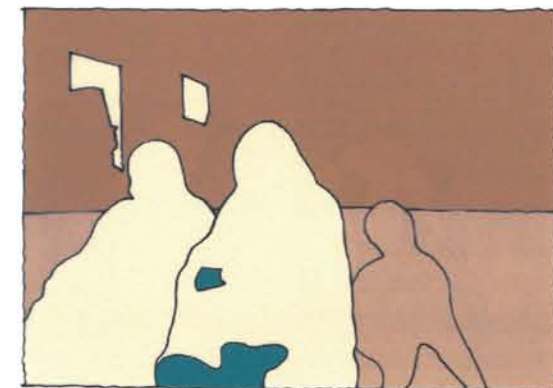
The earliest work, Millet's The Gleaners, is the most Realist in style due to its photorealistic portrayal of the subject matter. As social art becomes more popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social artists adopt a more stylistic interpretation of subject matter relying more on symbolism and exaggeration to relay the art's message and less on photo-like treatment of the subject. However, The Gleaners does communicate with the viewer through the simple arrangement of three large figures centered in the foreground. The simple background does not distract from the subject, and the painting is horizontally divided in two by the horizon line. The three groupings of trees along the horizon reflect the



arrangement and shape of the three figures bent over in the foreground. The golden brown color scheme is carried from the ground to the women's clothing symbolizing their ties to the earth. The use of the primary colors in the women's blue, red, and yellow hats is the only relief from the monochromatic color scheme to draw attention to the figures.

### ***Third Class Carriage***

Daumier's Third Class Carriage also features three large primary figures in the foreground. Daumier pushes the figures forward in the picture plane to draw the viewer into their space and create the illusion that the viewer is sitting across from the family in the carriage. The elderly woman in the center boldly makes eye contact with the viewer to directly communicate with the audience unlike Millet's passive subjects whose faces are hidden

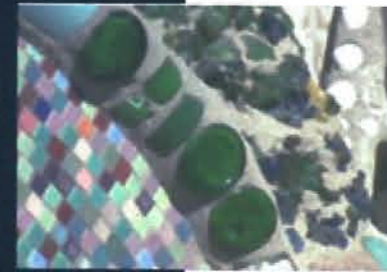


from the audience. Daumier uses a more sketch-like style than Millet with black outlining to emphasize the contours of the two women on the left. This painting also makes use of a monochromatic earth tone color scheme with contrasting bright green to draw the viewer's eye to the center figure. The horizontal line of the seat back divides the composition in half horizontally and separates the three figures in the foreground from the people behind them. The background in Third Class Carriage is much less simple than the empty backdrop behind The Gleaners to create a crowded overlapping effect. The figures in the background are pushed forward in the composition to emphasize the cramped space of the carriage.



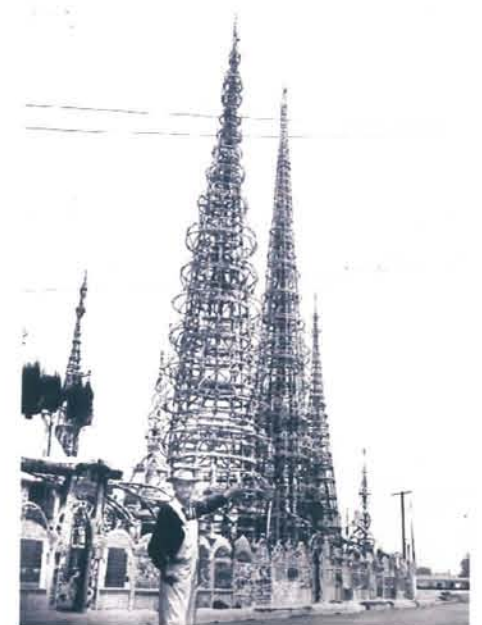
### Potato Eaters

Van Gogh's Potato Eaters further departs from Realism by using a painterly style that distorts and exaggerates the features of the subjects. The five figures gathered around a table do not acknowledge the audience's presence, making the viewer feel like an observer of the scene. Once again, a monochromatic color scheme is used, but Van Gogh uses a much darker palette than Millet and Daumier with an excessive use of black shadows and only the soft yellowish glow of the center lamp to break up the darkness. Van Gogh begins to address perspective in this composition by skewing the angle of the table which appears to be tipped upwards to reveal to the viewer that the family only has potatoes to eat. Van Gogh also divides the composition vertically with the edge of the wall to set the right-most figure apart from the group and draw attention to her facial expression.



### Watts Towers

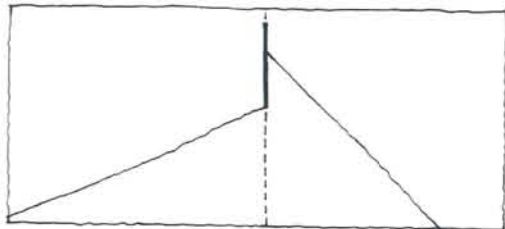
Unlike the two-dimensional paintings of Social Realism, Simon Rodia's Watts Towers can be considered public art, sculpture, and architecture. The towers' monumental scale gives identity to the community as a highly visible symbol of the Watts neighborhood. The towers are constructed of concrete and steel adorned with a collage-like mosaic of recycled and found materials including bottle caps, seashells, broken glass, bottles, tiles, and stones. The brightly colored mosaic surface includes both recognizable and unrecognizable components. The towers themselves are made of a spiral of concentric circles forming a steel frame with vertical elements emphasizing the height of towers. While the Watts Towers were not originally made to convey a social message, over time the structure acquired a social function by establishing an identity for the community.





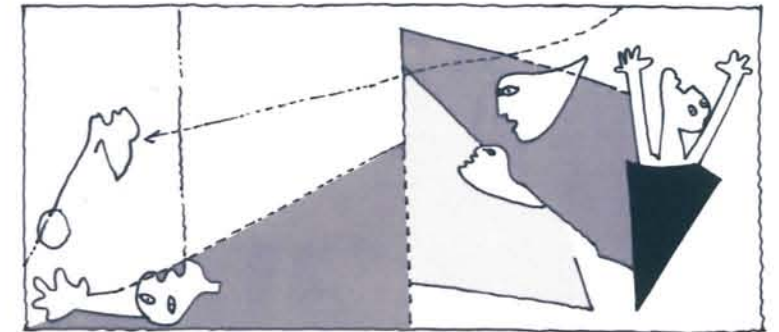
## Guernica

Picasso's allegorical painting, Guernica, is considered one of the most influential works in the 20<sup>th</sup> century art. In addition to its dramatic social message, Guernica completely departs from the formal standards of 19<sup>th</sup> century painting to influence Social Realism and develop Cubism as artistic styles. Its large, almost mural sized scale communicates a sense of drama and importance to the audience. The collage-like composition of flat geometric forms and overlapping planes is organized in a triangular arrangement. The collage-like quality of Guernica is further exemplified through the organization of two-dimensional cut-out shapes composed in a simultaneous arrangement that forms the basis for Cubism. Simultaneity is also shown through the appearance of day and night, and light and dark occurring at the same time.



Picasso's palette is limited to black, white, and gray tones to eliminate distraction from the image's social message. Exaggeration and distortion further express the horror of war. Picasso's non-realistic stylized interpretation uses outlining and an absence of modeling to further emphasize the graphic mural-like quality of the painting. The cut-out, flat collage-like quality of Guernica completely eliminates the use of perspective in the painting, although it does use shifting scales and simultaneity to create the appearance that it is being viewed from multiple angles and that many things are occurring at once. The simultaneous and overlapping arrangement lacks the clarity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings and contributes to a feeling of overwhelming confusion.

Symbolism is a major element in Guernica; the distorted emotional figures and dismembered body parts communicating terror and pain while the tiny flower stands as the only symbol of hope. Among the terrifying figures, the bull in the upper left corner is the only triumphant element in the composition.



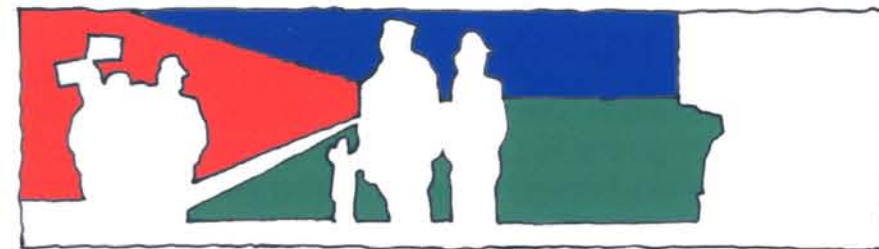
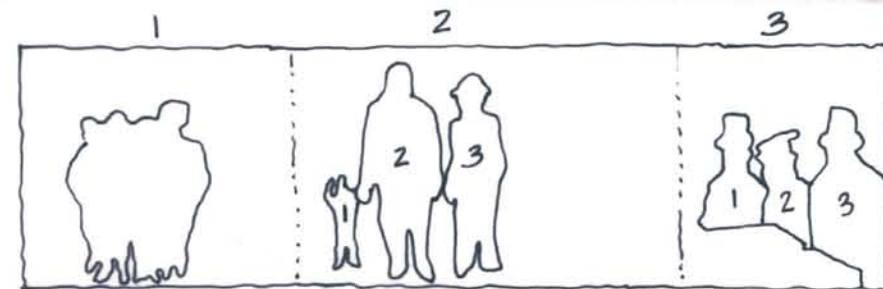


### ***The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti***

A true piece of Social Realism and a public art work, Ben Shahn's The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti uses many formal elements common within social art. The large-scale outdoor mosaic mural is organized as a triptych with a central panel and two flanking sections arranged to read as an overall composition.

The organization of the mosaic into three parts exemplifies the narrative quality of the subject by establishing a beginning, middle, and end to the story. The grouping of threes is continued in the arrangement of three figures in both the center and right panels. The left panel depicts a group protesting the execution, the center shows Sacco and Vanzetti handcuffed together while in the right panel, the Lowell Committee who was responsible for ordering the execution stand over the coffins of Sacco and Vanzetti, with the judge shown in the courthouse window behind them. (Bush, p.38) All the figures are shown in black, and are exaggerated in scale to create a threatening presence that communicates with and intimidates the viewer. The larger-than-life size of the figures, especially Sacco and Vanzetti in the central panel, expresses the importance of the social message of injustice that Sacco and Vanzetti represent. Sacco's shadow on the courthouse symbolizes a smear on justice resulting from the poorly handled trial, while the angle of the elongated shadows directs the viewer's eye towards the judge in the courthouse window. (Bush, p.38)

Shahn uses a graphic style of straight lines and geometric shapes consistent with the elements of muralism. The flat two-dimensional quality of the mural is further depicted through the large flat areas of color—the red brick wall, green grass, and blue sky forming a backdrop that sets the black figures apart from their background. Shahn's style makes use of distortion in the facial features of the figures, the shift in scale, and the use of perspective, which shows the receding brick wall in contrast with the flat illustration of the courthouse.

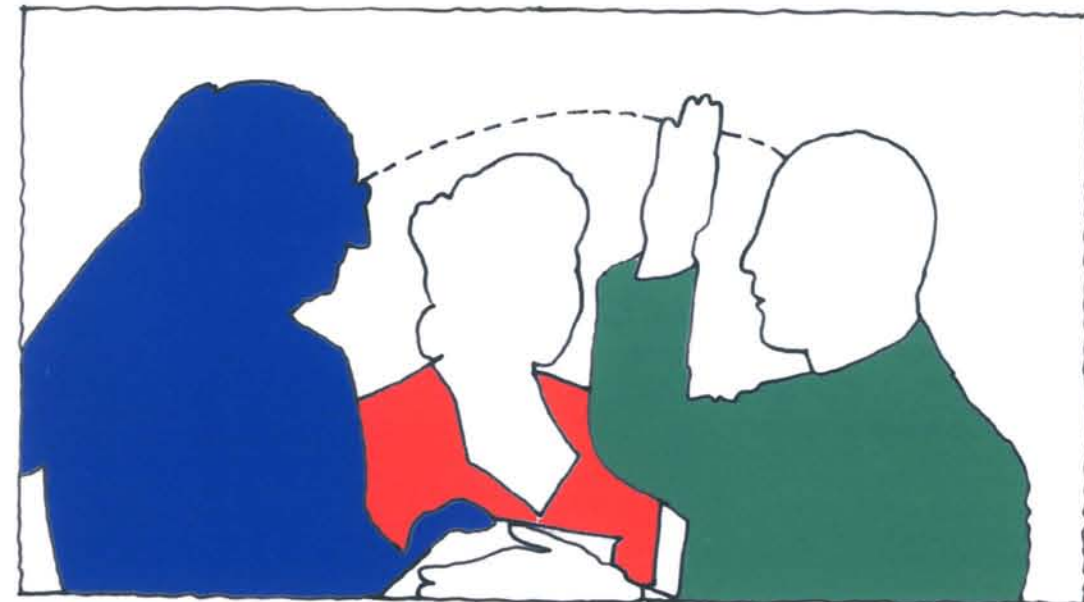




### ***The Great Wall Mural***

The Great Wall tells the story of the history of Los Angeles through a half-mile long narrative mural presented as a visual timeline. The mural uses a graphic illustrative style with bright colors and large exaggerated features in the foreground. The collaged images shift in scale and intertwine with each other to create a continuous overall effect rather than the appearance of separate individual panels.

The scene entitled *Asians Gain Citizenship and Property* is arranged as a group of three large scale figures unified by the curve of the American flag behind them. Large areas of blue, red, and green visually distinguish the figures from one another.



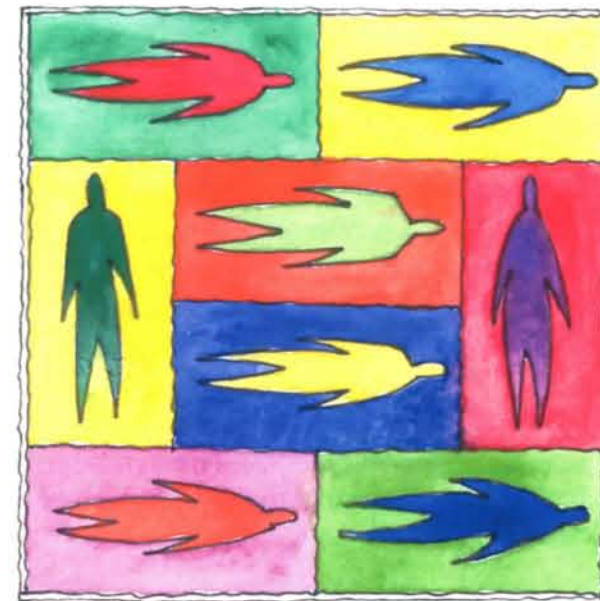
ASIANS GAIN CITIZENSHIP & PROPERTY



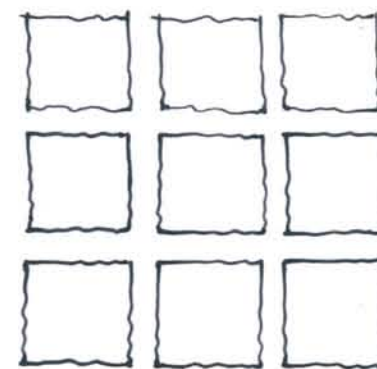
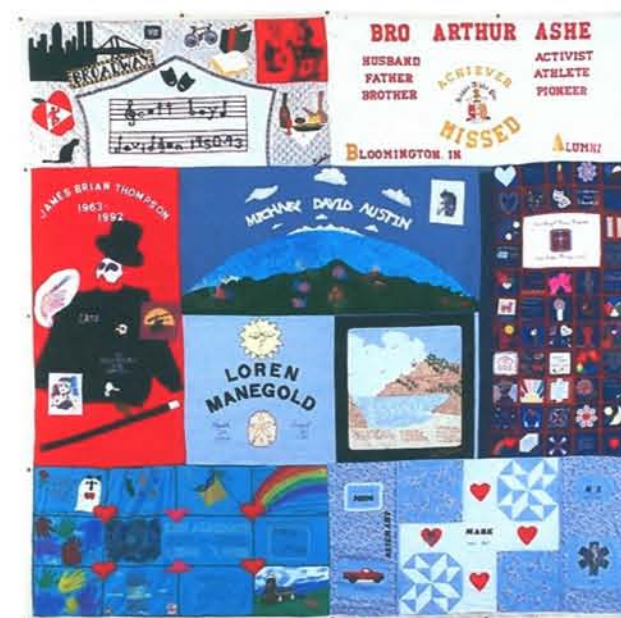
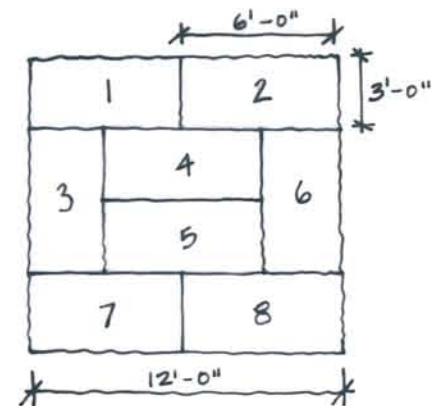
## AIDS Quilt

The AIDS Quilt is a collage-like narrative work which unifies grief, people, and ideas within one monumental community art project. The Quilt is comprised of 3' by 6' individual panels sewn together in groups of eight to form 12' by 12' squares. The repetition of the 12' by 12' squares forms the grid pattern of the Quilt. (*Aidsquilt*) The gridded organization relates to both the understanding of the individual panels and the overall arrangement of the Quilt. The part to whole relationship is important in the identity of individual AIDS victims within the whole of the AIDS epidemic because the Quilt personalizes the lives lost while conveying the enormity of the disease.

In addition to the collage of ideas and lives, the Quilt creates a visual collage of colors and materials including recycled and found objects. The symbolic nature of the AIDS Quilt is continued in the organization of the 3' by 6' panels each approximating the size of a human body.



12'-0" x 12'-0" SQUARE  
PANELS MADE UP OF  
8 3'-0" x 6'-0"  
RECTANGLES.



REPETITION OF 12x12  
SQUARE PANELS  
TO FORM QUILT.



## COMMON FORMAL ELEMENTS IN SOCIAL ART

Many formal elements and graphic devices are common to works of social art ranging from Social Realist paintings to community art projects.

To effectively communicate a social message, most social artworks are large in scale and located in highly visible public places. A flat graphic style using bright colors and outlining also contributes to the visibility and visual legibility of the work. Most works use narration and symbolism as visual language to tell a story through art.

The flat style is further exemplified through a collapsed flattened treatment of space often resulting in an overlapping collage-like arrangement. The collaged organization of many social art works exemplifies both the use of simultaneity and the importance of part to whole relationships. Through collage and simultaneity, artists can illustrate several things occurring at once and communicate multiple messages. Simultaneity is also used with perspective to show multiple views and angles from a single vantage point. These graphic devices are often used in conjunction with narrative themes to depict different parts of a story occurring at once.

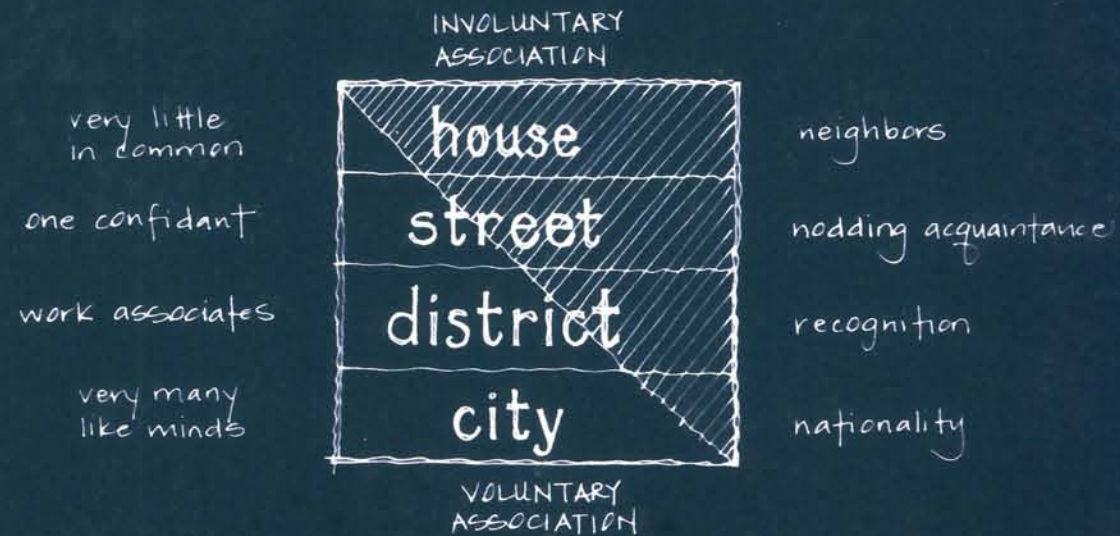
Part to whole relationships are evident in the subject matter, graphic layout, social messages, and materials used in social art works. Collaged works use many individual scenes to make up the overall artwork. Repetitive and collaborative works make use of the individual ideas and work of many to collectively form a large work. Mosaics use many small pieces assembled together to create a larger image. Finally, social art works give identity to individuals within a larger community, and identity to communities within society.

Distortion and exaggeration are common graphic devices used to visually emphasize the social messages in art. Scale is often distorted and exaggerated to accentuate an important concept or figure within the composition. Common materials in social art works include found and recycled objects and materials with symbolic meaning to the culture that created it.





# ARCHITECTURE AS A SOCIAL ART



HIERARCHY OF ASSOCIATION  
Alison and Peter Smithson

*"Whatever technique he chooses,  
the architect's function is to  
propose a way of life..."*

—Peter Smithson



## HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE

Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, architects had little interest in developing social architecture, despite architecture's inherent social qualities. (*Forty, p.103*) In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, architecture was considered the individual work of a single architect usually interested in creating monuments or buildings for the privileged upper class rather than the common public. These ideas changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Modernist influences such as CIAM, Team X, and Walter Gropius.

Industrialization was the catalyst in changing the role of architecture because it transformed patterns of life, formed cities, created new public building types such as train stations, skyscrapers, and factories, and resulted in monstrous social conditions in cities, exemplified by the contrast between the rich and poor. (*W.Curtis, p.22*) By the 1920s, architecture was changing to answer the call for public building types such as schools and housing, and institutions such as museums and libraries.

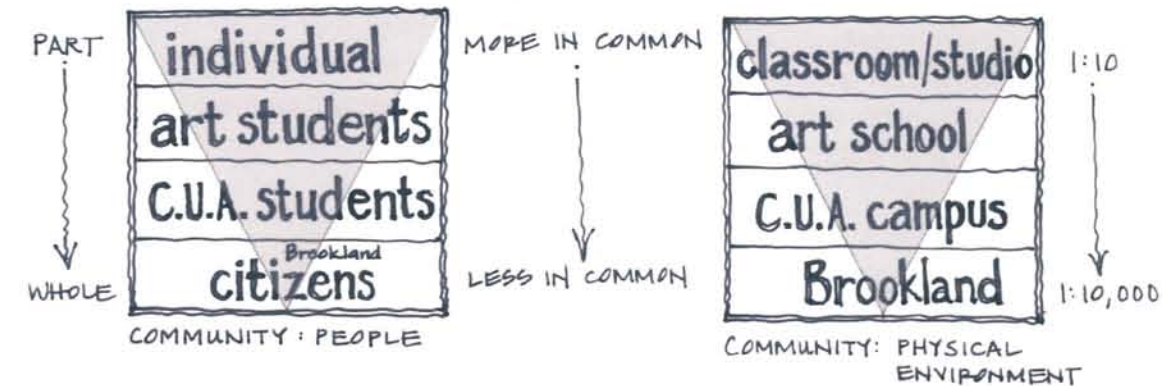
Architectural Modernism was concerned with improving mankind's social condition, and it diverged from the architectural ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by looking for social expression in its use. (*Forty, p.105*) The creation of buildings used by the general public began to interest architects in establishing the social role of architecture. These ideas within architecture coincided with the Social Realists' artistic interests in the common person as subject matter and the general public as an audience.

While many of the architects of this period may have been overly idealistic in their social theories, they encouraged the relationship between built space and the public, and realized architecture's potential as a means of improving society. (*Holmes*) The Modernists attempted to radically reshape people's relationships with each other and their environment (*Holmes*) through large-scale urban projects such as Le Corbusier's unbuilt Villa Radieuse project (1930s), Chandigarh (1950s), and Niemeyer and Costa's design of Brasilia (1950s). Where these projects were unsuccessful was in failing to recognize

that the complex organism of humanity cannot easily be redesigned. (*Holmes*) While architecture can shape the way people exist and interact, it cannot control them.

Furthermore, architecture can only act as a catalyst for social change combined with many other factors within a community. The Modern Movement sought to create an architectural panacea for the social ills of the city. (*Paine*) However, architecture is ultimately shaped by the people who use it, and although architects can create the opportunities for social and individual usage, they cannot determine the outcome. (*Forty, p.115*)

The new ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century realized the importance of the social functions of architecture and the power of the built environment in forging community relationships. These concepts have re-emphasized the inherent qualities of architecture as a social art, and re-established the role of the architect in creating spaces designed for the people who use them.





# THE SOCIAL ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE



*"The responsibility of architecture--  
indeed of any public art--is to  
communicate..."*

--James Wines



## THE SOCIAL ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is inherently social. As art, buildings and the built environment are cultural products (King, p. 1) symbolizing the time period, culture, and people who created them and influenced their design. According to Michael Graves, "It is a characteristic of any society to impart meaning to its artifacts, and architecture is surely considered one of society's primary artifacts." ("Interview", p. 39) However, architecture is further expressed socially through its use by people.

Buildings are originally created as a result of social needs to accommodate religious, cultural, educational, political, social, and economic functions. (King, p. 1) However, a building's form is not only influenced by human needs for a specific type of space. Architectural form is created in response to a combination of culture's physical needs, social needs, and social ideas. Social organization, activities, beliefs, ideas, and values influence the size, appearance, location, style, and form of architecture in addition to physical factors. (King, p. 1)

Anthropologists study communities through their built forms (King, p. 9) because social organization is often revealed spatially in architecture. (King, p. 3) Many building types have evolved from the social conditions of the people who created them. (King, p. 8) This explains why buildings serving the same function often take on different forms within different cultures. (King, p. 7) Religious architecture is a particularly good example because while the buildings all function as places of worship; churches, synagogues, and mosques all take on different forms reflecting the beliefs of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Another example of cultural beliefs revealed spatially in architecture is the Navajo house, called a hogan. The round plan represents the Navajo beliefs that life follows the path of the sun, that corners are to be avoided because they trap evil spirits, and the importance of the cardinal points.



While it is apparent that architecture is shaped by the culture of the people who make it, in return, architecture has a social responsibility to the communities and individuals who use it. There are three major social purposes of architecture explored in this thesis.

First, architecture has a social responsibility to communicate as art. According to James Wines, "The responsibility of architecture—indeed of any public art—is to communicate..." (Wines, p. 27) Here architecture is thought of as public art using visual language to communicate ideas through built form. Secondly, architecture can be considered community art because it is the product of a collaborative effort (Abercrombie, p. 8) and a collage of both individual and community ideas. Furthermore, the accessibility and high visibility of architecture makes it the ideal medium for communicating with a large audience.



The second social purpose of architecture is to link people to their physical surroundings. (*Abercrombie, p.8*) By creating a built environment, architecture shapes the human environment within the natural world establishing a place where the individual can connect with the human community. (*Scully, p.221*) Architecture creates places where communities can develop by providing opportunity for human interaction, for example, a church creates a religious community of parishioners, while houses create residential communities of neighbors.

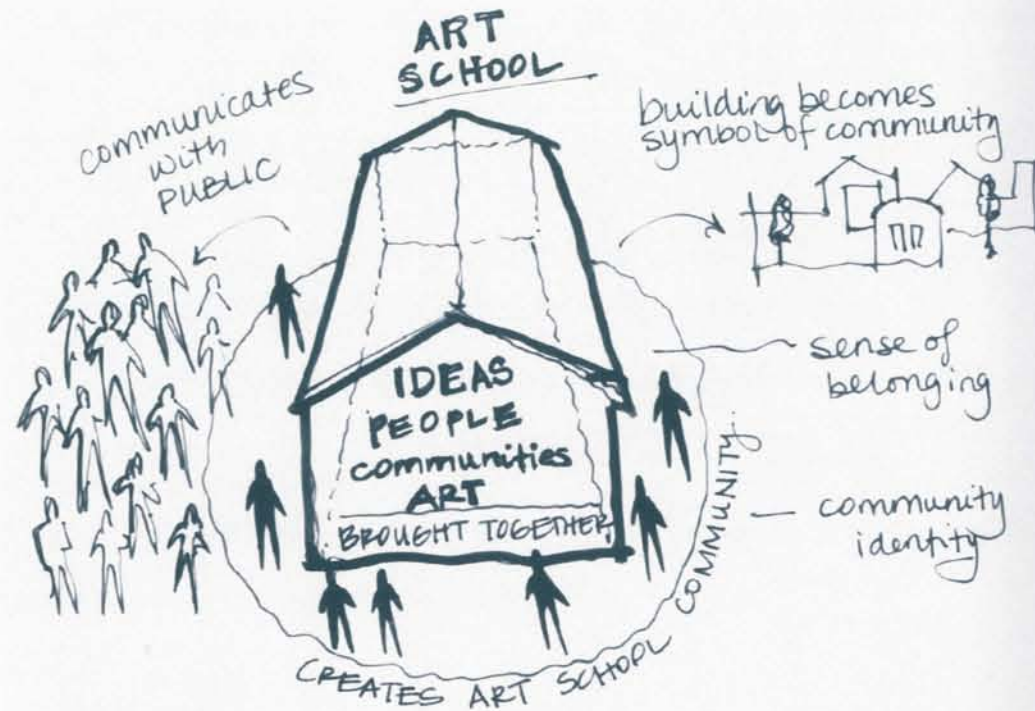
Thirdly, architecture functions by shaping social organization and relations. According to Christopher Alexander, it is the social nature of built space to configure social forms and relationships spatially. (*Forty, p.114*) Stanley Abercrombie takes this idea further by asserting that architecture can manifest goals of social reform. (*Abercrombie, p.8*) While the built environment alone cannot solely create communities, architecture can spatially reveal social ideas resulting in the redefinition of a group's identity and reorganization of their social structure. It is the architect's role to create the opportunities for individual and social usage, but the outcome is controlled by many factors, primarily the people within the built environment.

Mankind has the ability to adapt and give meaning to spaces, and built spaces can alter social form and activity. The relationships between buildings and social behavior are studied by sociologists. (*Forty, p.314*) Architecture, as built occupiable space and as cultural symbol, enables individuals to understand their roles as social beings within a collective existence. (*Forty, p.115*)

The social roles of architecture put considerable responsibility on architects who must create buildings that successfully induce a sense of belonging to a society facing persisting social differences (*Forty, p.314*) in the hopes of encouraging relationships that will ultimately foster a sense of community.



## THE SOCIAL ROLE OF THE THESIS PROJECT



*"Buildings are among the most powerful means that a society has to constitute itself in space-time..."*

—Bill Hillier



## THE SOCIAL ROLE OF THE THESIS PROJECT

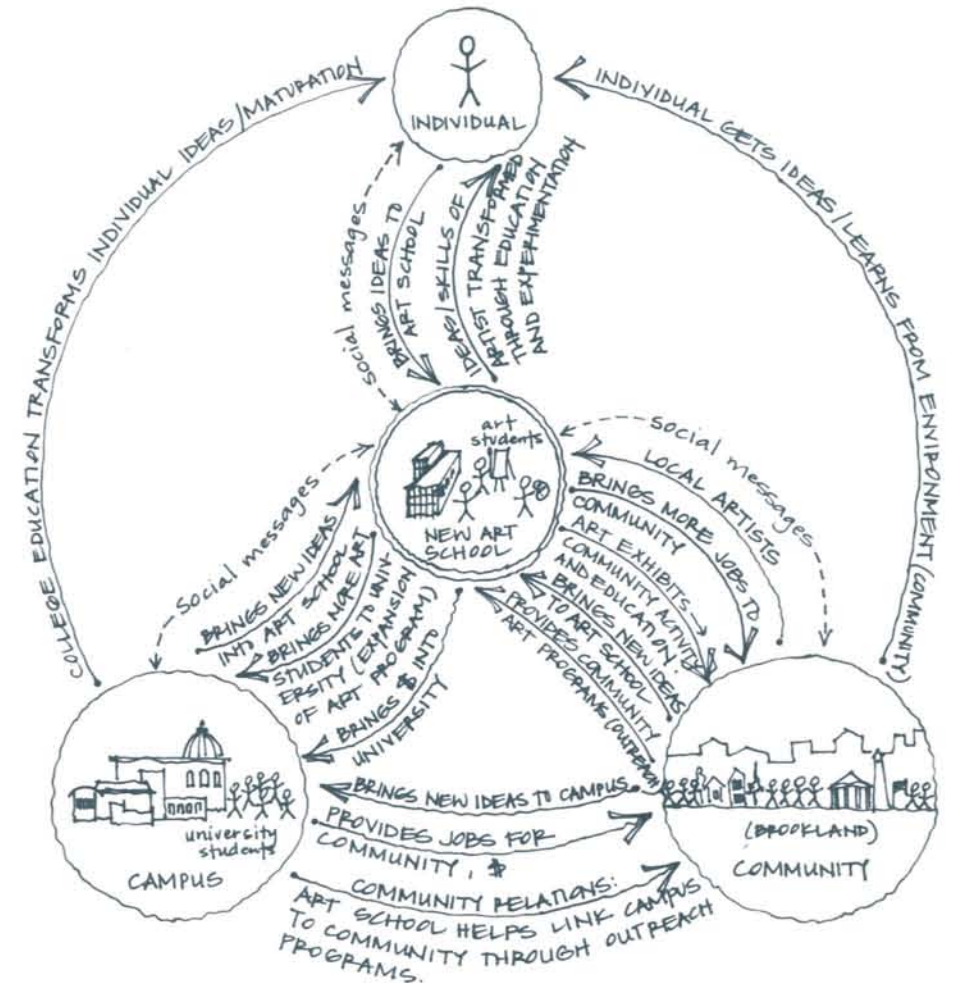
The social goal of this thesis project is to use architecture as a vehicle for communication between art and the public to create a sense of community identity. While I cannot dictate that the art created within this art school communicate to the public, I can design a building that both communicates with the public and encourages interaction between art and the surrounding communities. This will be achieved through architecture designed to unify people, groups, and ideas while retaining and encouraging the identities of individuals and communities.

The design project will encourage communication between individuals and groups by acting as a social condenser to bring people, communities, ideas, and art together in one building, establishing an environment that promotes creative thought and process.

The architectural design will reflect the collage-like expression of the multiple ideas of the art school environment, becoming a symbol of the art community. By symbolizing the art community, the building will establish an identity for both the school and the artists within it. While defining a unified art community, the design must simultaneously address the individuality of the many overlapping communities within the art school that comprise the art community. Additionally, the creation of an art school community will establish a sense of belonging for those who study, live, and work there.

The design project will also serve the social roles of fostering collaborative effort, revealing artistic process, and providing public access to art. These functions will encourage artistic interest, participation, and communication to strengthen the identity of the art community.

## HOW DOES A NEW ART SCHOOL AFFECT A COMMUNITY?





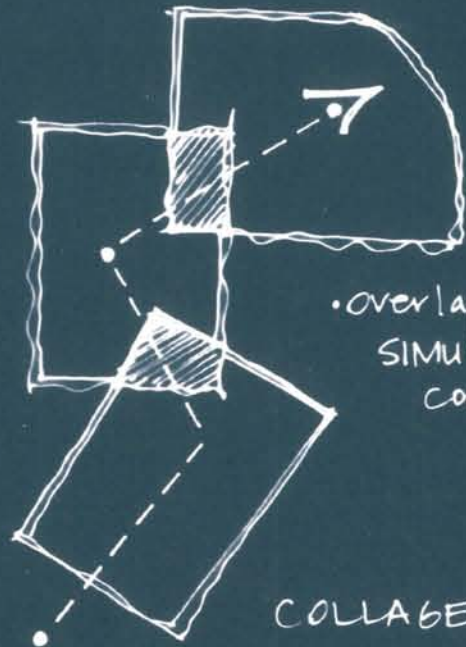
# THE FORMAL ELEMENTS OF THE THESIS PROJECT

NARRATIVE SEQUENCE

3

2

1



• overlap creates  
SIMULTANEOUS  
condition

COLLAPSED ELEMENTS

*"Remember that a picture--before  
being a war horse, a nude woman  
or some anecdote--is essentially a  
plane surface covered with colors  
and assembled in a certain order."*

--Maurice Denis



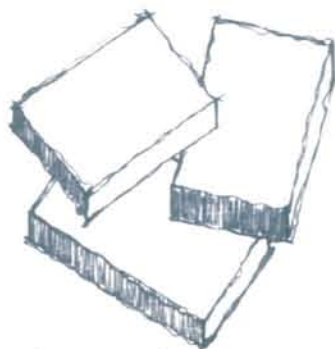
## THE FORMAL ELEMENTS OF THE THESIS PROJECT

The formal design goal of this thesis project is to design a space that encourages communication between art and the public through the architectural expression of spatial collage, narrative, distortion, and simultaneous perspective. These elements are devices used by artists in creating public art that communicates social messages.

As discovered through the analysis of social art including works of Social Realism, folk art, public art, and community art projects, there are common formal elements used in art that communicates effectively.

### **Spatial Collage**

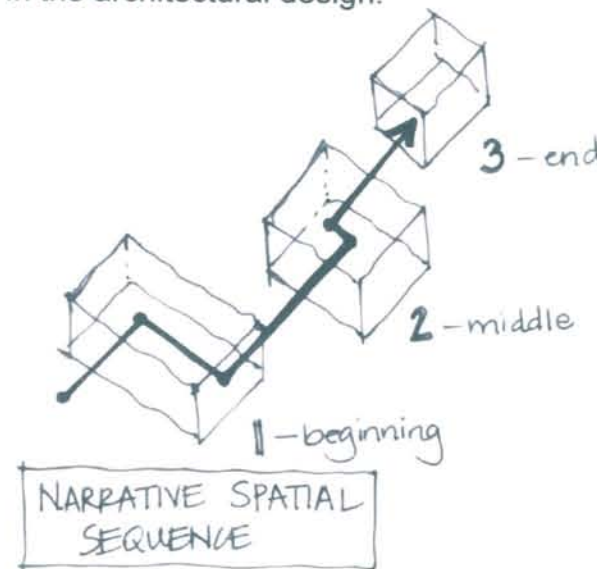
Collage, as a common element in social art, is useful in illustrating many different overlapping ideas in a single work of art. Collage is used in both expression of subject matter and materiality, and is representational of many ideas coming together and overlapping within the art school. As an element of architectural form, spatial collage will create overlapping studio spaces (rather than separate enclosed rooms) to encourage human interaction and communication within the art school. Collage can also be used in the expression of building materials and to create the illusion of flat, collapsed space comprised of a series of overlapping planes, often used a graphic device in public art such as murals.



Collaged Spaces.

### **Narrative**

Narrative is deployed by artists to tell a story, often depicted linearly as a visual timeline of events or as a collage of overlapping intertwined images. Narrative is temporal, usually having a beginning, middle, and end, often visually organized as a triptych. In the architectural design of the thesis project, narrative can be used to tell the story of the artistic process and to influence the design of sequence and circulation through the building. The process of creating community art is often considered equally or more important than the finished project, an idea that will be expressed in the circulation through the art school that will reveal the artistic process from beginning ideas, to work in progress (studios), to finished product (gallery). The idea of process can also be represented through the revelation of the building process in the architectural design.



### **Distortion**

Distortion and exaggeration of scale, facial expressions, form, style, and color are used by artists for visual emphasis in communicating with their audience. Architectural distortion can create shifts in scale to create a hierarchy of spaces or to emphasize or alter the perception of architectural elements, light, and materiality.

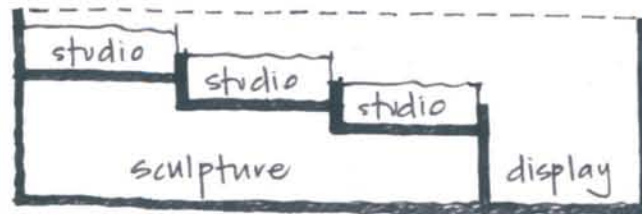


### ***Simultaneous Perspective***

Simultaneous perspective is related to collage because it is employed by artists to show many things occurring at once. This theme in architecture is indicative of the simultaneous activity occurring within the art school. Spatially, simultaneity can be used to create overlapping spaces, particularly studio and public spaces. Spaces that are experienced simultaneously and have blurred boundaries can be employed to create flexible spaces for the creation of art. Additionally, simultaneous views can occur through parts of the building and of the exterior to emphasize this idea.

### ***Exterior Expression***

According to James Wines, public façade is one of the most direct vehicles of communication and one of the most underused resources available for the projection of socially-conscious ideas. (*Wines, p.30*) As public art, the art school's exterior will be of equal importance to the design of the interior because the building's exterior expression is first and foremost what will communicate with the public. The exterior of the building will reveal the artistic process that is occurring inside, expressing the building's identity as an art school.



### ***Sectional Design***

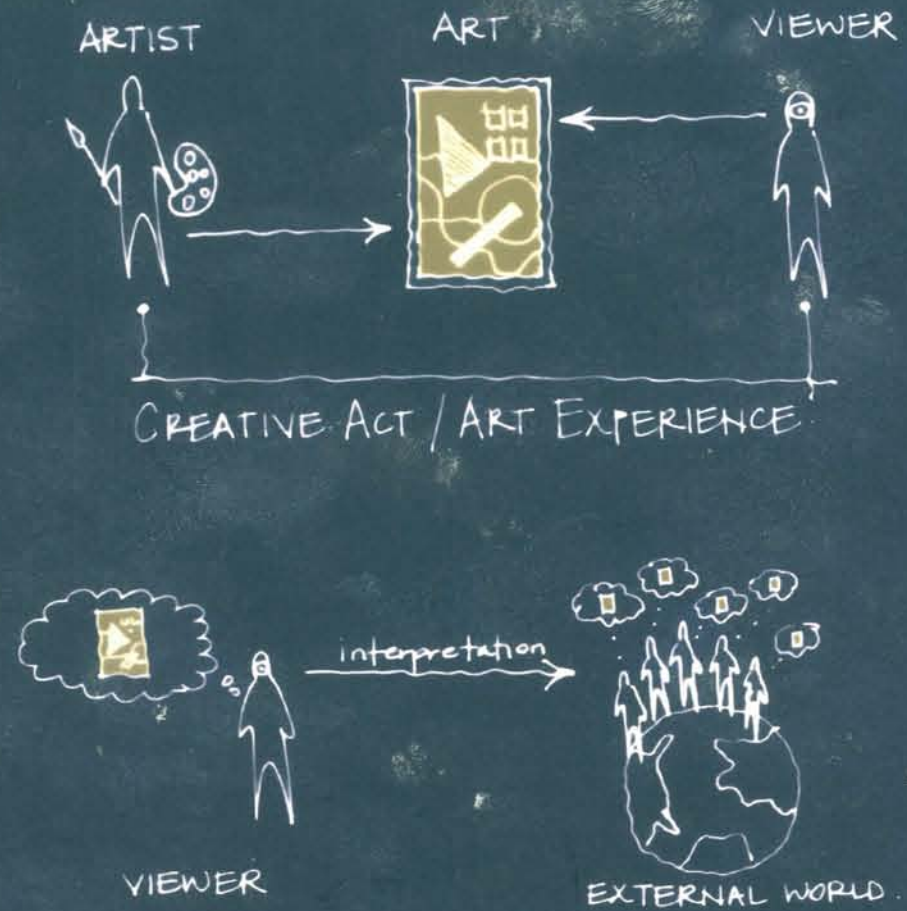
Due to the sloped site and the ideas of collage and simultaneity, sectional design will be a fundamental concept in the building's organization and expression. The creation of simultaneous open studio spaces will be achieved sectionally by allowing spaces to overlap, perhaps by expressing them as terraced trays. The open spaces will encourage communication and the revelation of the artistic process.

Circulation will also be a sectional consideration. Ramps and stairs will be necessary to move through terraced spaces. Movement through the site will also be incorporated in the building design to encourage public interaction with the art school. Due to the elevational change of the site, outdoor stairs are necessary to move through the site, an element that could be integrated into the building design so pedestrians move through, rather than around, the art school.





# PROGRAM



*"...the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act."*

--Marcel Duchamp



## EDUCATION IN ART COMMUNITIES

The link between art and community is explored through the educational philosophies of various types of art institutions. Art is often an expression of the artist's environment, so the relationship of the art school to community is fundamental in establishing an educational pedagogy. The communities of people and physical environments that the artist interacts with often shape the artist's work; inversely, visual art can have a profound impact on a city's communities. University art schools such as the Art Institute of Chicago and the more specialized Corcoran School of Art, along with community art schools like the Torpedo Factory Art Center, coupled with community outreach programs all have strong yet varying relationships with their surrounding communities.

The Art Institute of Chicago considers the city of Chicago part of the school's campus. As the source of social and cultural activities, the city of Chicago provides the stimulus for ideas and attitudes expressed through art. (*Art Institute*) The Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C. views itself as "an ever-evolving community of artists, designers, and scholars" with both the Washington community and the nation's art education community. (*Corcoran*) The Corcoran School of Art is considered a "pure" museum art school as it is one of a select few art schools coupled with a national art museum. (*AIA/ASCA, p.32*) The relationship of the school and museum communities results in an interesting dynamic unlike art schools that function independently. The partnership between these two communities creates direct contact between the art world, artists, curators, and scholars. (*AIA/ASCA, p.34*) In addition to the link between the educational and professional art communities, the Corcoran is tied to the cultural infrastructure of the surrounding city, (*AIA/ASCA, p.34*) where 20 million tourists are drawn to Washington annually, a cultural and intellectual capital and ideal location for art education to occur. (*AIA/ASCA, p.36*) The importance of the arts is displayed through Washington's numerous museums, theaters, and monuments, all which become an educational arena and an extension of the Corcoran's campus. The clustering of 16 major colleges and universities in Washington also creates a large

educational community functioning within a giant urban campus. (*AIA/ASCA, p.37*)

The Corcoran School of Art serves the city of Washington through its extensive Visual Arts Community Outreach Program (V.A.C.O.P.), which includes Corcoran After-School Art (C.A.S.A.), Corcoran Art New Visions at School (C.A.N.V.A.S.), and Corcoran Art Mentorship Program (C.A.M.P.) (*Corcoran*) In addition to influencing local children by encouraging creative and personal development through art, these community outreach programs promote the community-involvement of Corcoran art majors through the educational and civic experience that results from teaching within the community. (*Corcoran*)

The Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria, Virginia is another example of the transformative powers of art within a community, and has served as a model for art centers around the world. The Torpedo Factory was built by the United States Navy to manufacture munitions during World War I and was used again during World War II when it employed 6,000 persons and eliminated unemployment in the area. (*Virginia Historical Society*) The Torpedo Factory was then used for storage until 1974 when it was transformed into an art center for Alexandria's bicentennial. By creating a community of artists and drawing in thousands of visitors, the new art center played a significant role in transforming the city of Alexandria by increasing tourism and initiating urban renewal. Today, the Torpedo Factory considers itself a museum of art-in-progress where artists, students, collectors, and the general public interact with a community of working artists. (*Library of Congress*)



## DESCRIPTION OF THE THESIS PROGRAM

The program of the design thesis is a School of Visual Art for the Catholic University of America. This program will encourage communication and relationships between art and the public by bringing them together in one building.

The studio art program at Catholic University is part of the School of Arts and Sciences and currently enrolls roughly 100 students. Art majors may concentrate in either painting or sculpture, and the studio art program offers courses in drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, art history, and ceramics, in addition to foundation level classes.

The thesis project will replace the current inadequate art school facility at a different location on campus. The existing art school is housed in Salve Regina Hall, a small shed-like building that contains offices, a small gallery, a painting/drawing studio, a sculpture lab, and an adjacent printmaking shed. It is in poor condition and lacks adequate space and facilities for the studio art program's population. Additionally, the current facilities are preventing the art school from growing and becoming a more prominent program at the university. A new facility would draw more attention to the art program and would provide space for more students.

The new School of Visual Art will have an area of approximately 33,000 square feet, and will include general drawing and painting studio space, a sculpture area, a printmaking studio, a photography lab, a computer lab, lecture classrooms, and display and gallery spaces. An additional function of the art school will be an artists' residence. The building will contain living space for six visiting artists to live, work, and teach for a semester or year. Including live-in artists within the art school will contribute to the creation of a community of artists within the Catholic University community.

The art school will be considered a museum of art in progress to encourage community interaction with the school by revealing the process of art making.

The school will foster an environment where the process of creating art is just as important as the finished work itself. These ideas will encourage visual communication and interaction between artist and public to promote public participation in the artistic process.

The art school will serve the dual role of housing art and becoming a piece of public art itself. The building, like the art being created within it, has a social responsibility of communicating with its audience through visual language to encourage interaction, new ideas, and a sense of community among the people who use it. A building that houses art can never be an aesthetically neutral environment, as its formal elements, symbolic meaning, architectural style, and physical site affect the interpretation of the artwork contained within. (*Thistlewood, p.7*) The success of art as communication is dependent on people seeing and experiencing it. Although displaying art in museums and galleries often limits its accessibility to a public audience, not all art can be displayed in outdoor public places. This creates an architectural issue of how to design indoor galleries that function as inviting public spaces.

The School of Visual Art will function as an art school, museum, community center, and housing. As an art school, the project will educate by encouraging new ideas, new techniques, and communication between students and professors. The museum's role in community life encourages preservation of heritage, community engagement, education and lifelong learning, economic development, and access to art for all. (*Able*) As a community center, the project seeks to encourage public participation in art, establish an artistic community on campus, and promote relationships between public and art, artists and non-artists. Finally, the inclusion of artist housing within the building will further encourage a sense of community within the art school.





SPATIAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposed program for the School of Visual Arts will include:

Space	Area in square feet
Entry Space	500
Administrative Space	600
Faculty Offices (10x100sf)	1000
Gallery/Display Space	3000
Drawing/Painting/General Studio Spaces (4x1500sf)	6000
Sculpture Studio Space ( <i>Pottery and Ceramics</i> )	3000
Printmaking Studio Space	1500
Photography Lab	2000
Computer Lab	1000
Slide/Lecture Classrooms (3x1000sf)	3000
Student Lounge/Gathering Space	300
Artists' Residences (6 total—3 rooms grouped around each common living area, kitchen, and bathroom)	
Dormitory Style Rooms (6x150sf)	900
Common Living Area (2x200sf)	400
Common Kitchen (2x100sf)	200
Common bathrooms (2x75sf)	150
Individual Studios (6x250sf)	1500
Larger Work Space/Common Studio Area	1000
Support Space (approx. 25% of net area)	6950
Storage Space	
Circulation	
Toilets	
Mechanical Space	
Exterior Spaces including Sculpture Court	
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>	<b>approx. 33,000 sf.</b>

PROGRAMMATIC DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to spatial requirements, practical design issues must be considered, including ample storage, lighting, equipment, circulation, ventilation, display methods, and materials used in the art school.

*Gallery/Display/Exhibition Space*

The art school will contain abundant display space for both wall mounted and free-standing art objects. The display space will be dispersed throughout the building primarily in public open spaces including circulation areas, gathering areas, and open exhibit spaces. A smaller closed gallery will exist for exhibiting fragile or valuable pieces for safety and security reasons, but most of the art will be displayed in public areas where it can be easily accessed by a larger audience. For these reasons, an accurate estimate of the area of the display space is difficult to calculate as the whole building is considered a display gallery. The display spaces will be organized according to the sequence through the building, strengthening the idea of narrative in circulation. The prevention of "museum fatigue" is also to be considered in the design and organization of display spaces and their relationship to studio spaces. Natural light, especially light brought in from above through skylights, should also be considered in the design of gallery spaces.

*Studio Spaces*

Ventilation and the types of media used will be an important consideration in the design of studio spaces that are open to one another. While general drawing studios can be open, the sculpture area will be separate because of the use of messy materials. General studios should receive northern light to prevent glare and reflections while allowing natural light into the work area. The use of washable, non-porous, chemical-resistant, resilient materials is a necessity in studio spaces. General art equipment includes drawing and work tables, easels, canvas storage racks, and storage cabinets.



### ***Sculpture Studio Requirements (Clay, Pottery, and Ceramics)***

The sculpture area should be located at the lower level of the school with easy access to a service entrance for the delivery of heavy materials such as clay. This location will also keep the sculpture area separate from the other studios; an important consideration due to the dust created by clay. The requirements for a clay sculpture area include work areas for designing, forming, and glazing, storage for materials and drying, sloped floors with drains, a tool room, and access to an outdoor work area. Kilns should be located in a separate area against an exterior wall because of the heat that is generated. Equipment for the sculpture studio will include wedging boards, clay storage cabinets, drying cabinets, potter's wheels, work tables, sculpture stands, kilns, and sinks.

### ***Printmaking Studio Requirements***

The printmaking processes of lithography, etching, silkscreen, block printing, and intaglio use toxic chemicals, requiring that the printmaking area be located away from other activities. Printmaking equipment includes printing presses, paper cutters, paper storage cabinets, drying racks, and storage for acid and chemicals.

### ***Photography Lab Requirements***

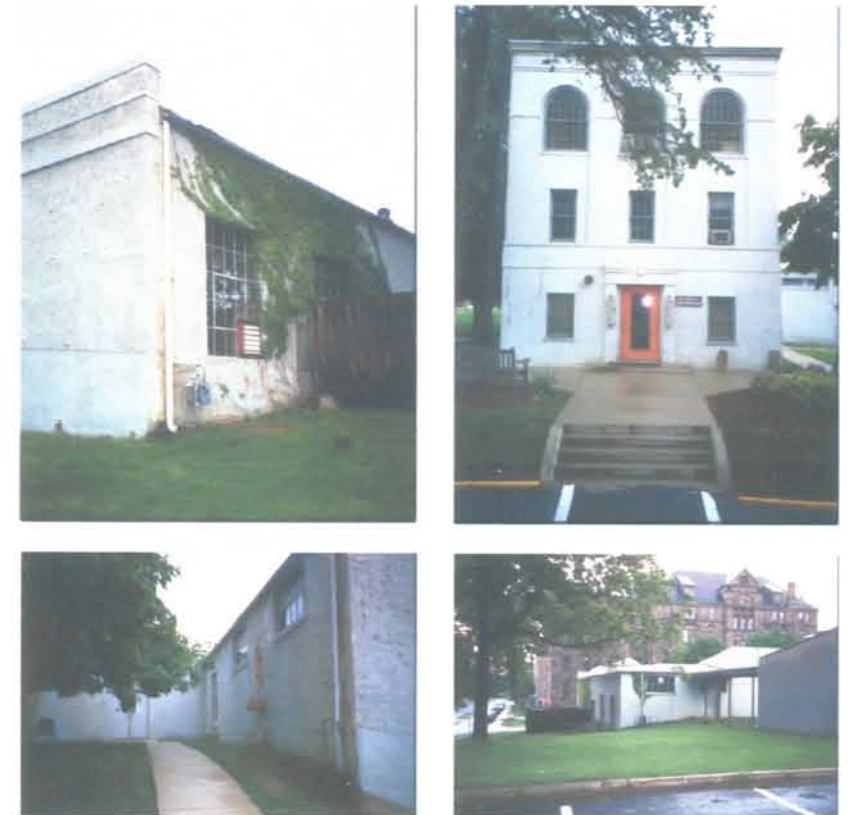
The photography lab has three areas: a general studio classroom, a photo lab (darkroom) where film processing occurs, and a finishing area for drying, trimming, and mounting. The photo lab requires total darkness and light-trap entrances. Equipment for the photo lab includes enlargers, a refrigerator, contact printers, developing sinks, film drying cabinets, papercutters, paper cabinets, metal-lined cabinets, print washers, safe lights, and timers. Equipment for the finishing area includes drymounting presses, papercutters, sinks, print drying cabinets, print dryers, copy cameras, work tables, and counters.

### ***Artists' Residences***

The residential area for artists shall have a separate entrance and be located close to a parking area. The six visiting artists will live in dorm-style apartments with three bedrooms grouped around a common living area, kitchen, and toilets. Each artist will also have an individual studio located off of a larger communal workspace. The individual studios will be accessible and visible to the rest of the school.

### ***Additional Spaces***

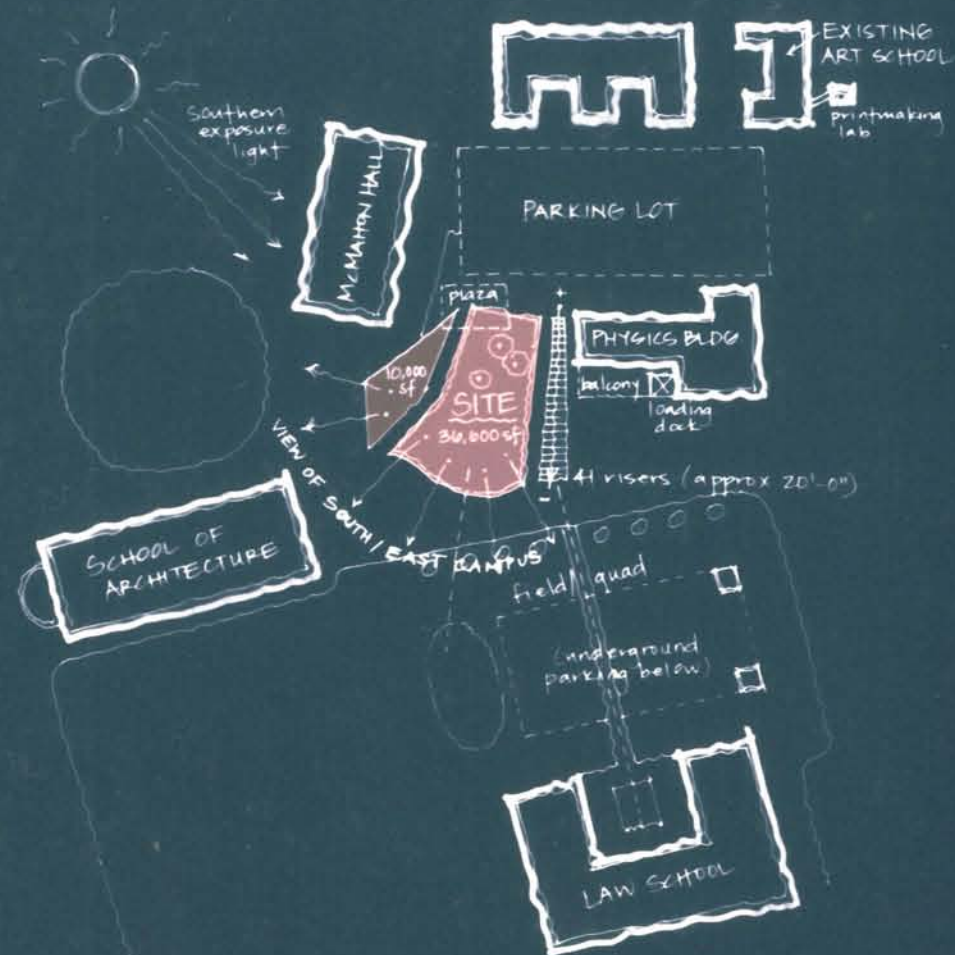
In addition to the interior display, studio, and residential spaces within the art school, exterior spaces for public gathering, circulation through the site, outdoor work areas, and the display of art will be a part of the design.



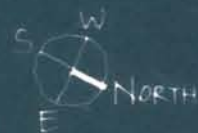
*Existing Art School Facility.*



# SITE



SKETCH of PROPOSED SITE  
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY of AMERICA  
Washington, D.C.



*"The business of art is to reveal  
the revelation between man and  
his environment."*

--D H. Lawrence



## SITE

### **Public Art and Context**

In addition to the social quality of architecture derived from its use by people and its importance as a cultural symbol, architecture is social because of its relationship to its site, whether it is located within an urban built environment or in a community with nature. (*Abercrombie, p.8*) The recognition of architecture's relation to its surroundings emphasizes the importance of site in creating a building that communicates with its human and physical context.

The concept of context being incorporated into the work itself is known as "site-specificity", and it is important to both public art and architecture as a form of public art. According to Rosalyn Deutsche, context extends beyond the physical surroundings to include the symbolic, social, political, and historical meanings within which the artwork, spectator, and site are situated. (*Deutsche, p.159*)

In works of public art, the context creates framing conditions for understanding the art. (*Deutsche, p.159*) The site becomes a part of the art that cannot be ignored, as a mural painted on the side of a building will be viewed and understood differently than one painted on a highway overpass. The unification of context and artwork exemplifies the idea that public art creates socially constructed spaces. Like architecture, public art can engage and re-orient spatial patterns, direct human vision, and invite viewers into the space. (*Deutsche, p.160*) Public artists themselves contend that they are not merely placing objects in urban spaces, but are actually creating spaces with art. (*Deutsche, p.166*) Architecture has always been concerned with the creation of public space, and as a form of public art, architecture is read within its context whether that be the physical site or the social ideas of the surrounding communities.

Public art can be considered a form of urbanism because it is thought of in relation to the functions and activities of its site rather than being isolated from them. (*Deutsche, p.162*) In addition to communicating to its audience

through visual language, public art often serves a social function by creating places where people can sit, play, eat, read, and dream. (*Deutsche, p.163*)

### **The Thesis Project Site:**

#### **Description and Analysis of Social and Physical Context**

The specific site for the art school is on the campus of the Catholic University of America in Northeast Washington, D.C. Catholic University is located on an eclectic 145 acre suburban campus in the Brookland Community that includes grassy quads and varying architectural styles ranging from traditional to modern buildings. The focal point of the campus the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception which is visible from the entire campus because of its large colorful dome.

Both the physical context and the social context of the design project are important in describing and analyzing the thesis site. The social context of the site is a campus community of approximately 5,600 students and 650 faculty members plus staff and public citizens who also use the university facilities. The campus is a place where numerous activities occur simultaneously each day creating a community of people who study, live, socialize, eat, and work there. The campus community is also part of the larger Brookland community where many students and faculty live. Many members of the Brookland community use the Catholic University resources, further integrating the campus with its surrounding social environment. The influence of the larger Washington, D.C. community is also part of the relationship between the site and its social context. Washington, D.C. is an art-rich community and is the location of numerous art museums, making it the ideal setting for an art school. The diversity of the city's population brings varied ideas into the art and design community as well. The ideas and needs of this human collage of people influence the social context of the thesis project site.

Due to its location on a pedestrian-oriented campus, the site is experienced primarily by people on foot. Additionally, the site is located in the middle of campus between three public gathering areas, increasing the interaction of people with the site. The site's location in the center of multiple programmatic



communities has the potential to increase the interaction of individuals and communities by encouraging communication between them. Many of the campus buildings are grouped according to program to create separate communities including a residential community, a theological community, a social sciences community, a law community, and a fine arts community. These communities all come into contact with the site which has the potential to bring individual community members together to foster intercommunal relations and strengthen the university community as a whole.

The physical context of the site is a hilly wedge-shaped area of 36,000 square feet (plus an additional adjacent 10,000 square feet to be used if necessary) currently slated for expansion by the university. It is currently a grass-covered hill with few trees and is flanked on two sides by campus roads. It is located in the middle of the campus in the center of a "pinwheel" arrangement of buildings. Surrounding buildings include the Physics Building (Hannan Hall), the Columbus School of Law School, the School of Architecture and Planning (Crough Center), a mixed used building (McMahon Hall), a parking lot, and a grassy quad with underground parking below.

The elevation of the site drops approximately 22 feet from the West end to the East end. This high elevation combined with its central location makes the proposed site a highly visible area. Not only is the site a focal point from the surrounding buildings, but views from the site provide panoramic views of the East side of the campus. The slope of the site reveals the importance of section in the building design.

Circulation paths on campus and through the site are also an important design consideration. The way pedestrians move through campus influences how the site and the building in it will be seen. The site serves as a distribution point for the two major circulation paths through campus, one originating at the main campus entrance and the other from the on-campus residential community. Both of these circulation patterns move in the direction of the site where the circulation paths split and distribute pedestrians to other parts of campus. The pedestrian circulation paths move towards the site increasing the visibility and the interaction people have with the site. The site is easily

accessible to those who arrive by car due to its proximity to an underground parking garage and an adjacent parking lot. The campus is also easily reached by the nearby metro stop, which increases the number of people who have access to the campus.

The location of the site addresses the ideas of individuality vs. unity in establishing part to whole relationships along with the formal concept of simultaneous perspective. As part of a community of campus buildings, the art school will function both collectively with the other campus buildings and on its own as an individual building with an individual identity. The art school will create its own community and will also become a part of the university community.

Due to its high visibility, circulation paths, elevation, and relation to public spaces, the site also makes use of simultaneous perspective because it can be viewed from multiple angles at once, further increasing the amount of people who interact with the site. Increased visibility allows the building to communicate with a larger audience to establish an identity for both the art school building and the community it creates.



# SITE PHOTOGRAPHS





## SURROUNDING BUILDINGS



McMahon Hall (Admin./Arts & Sciences)



Hannan Hall (Physics Building)



Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception



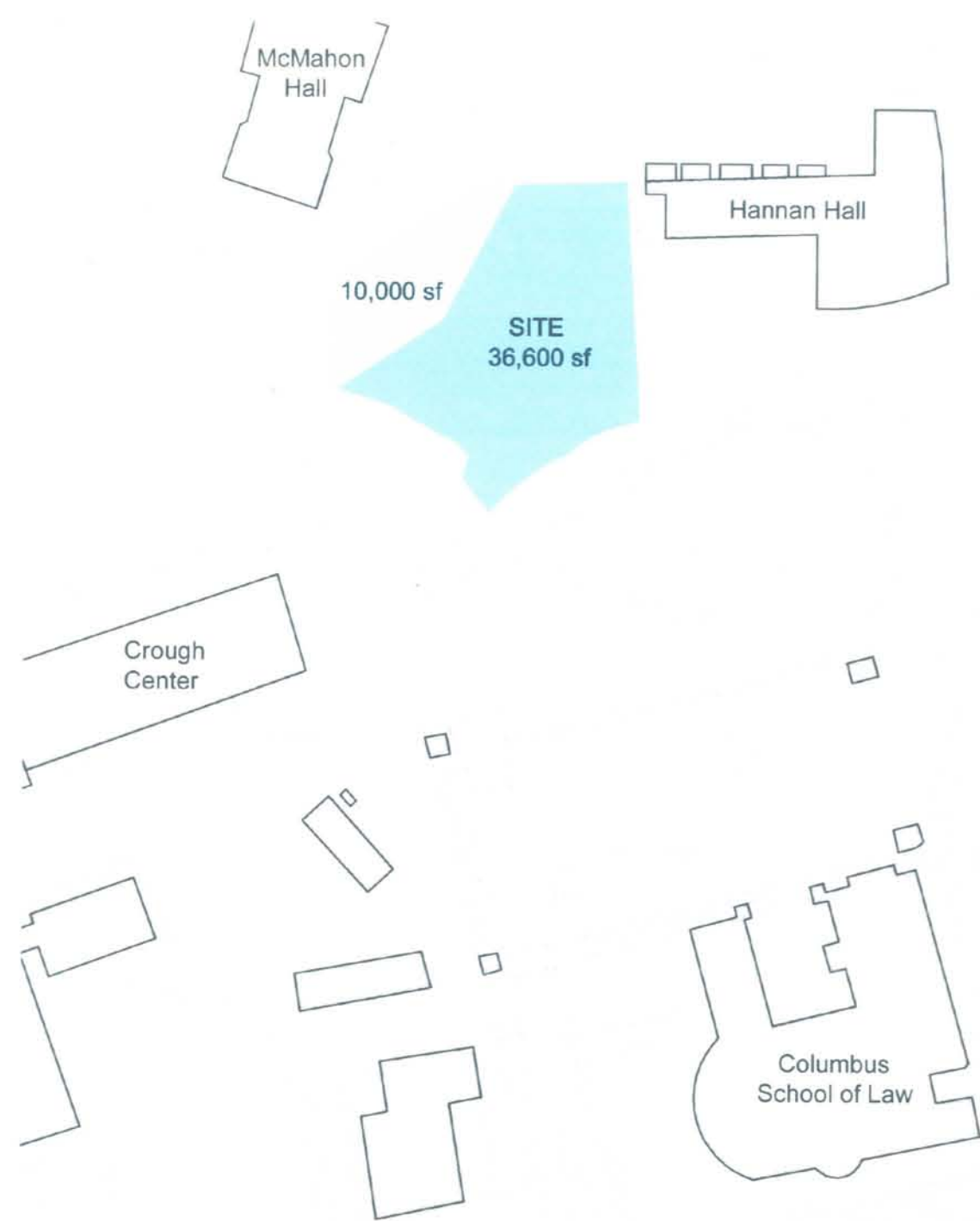
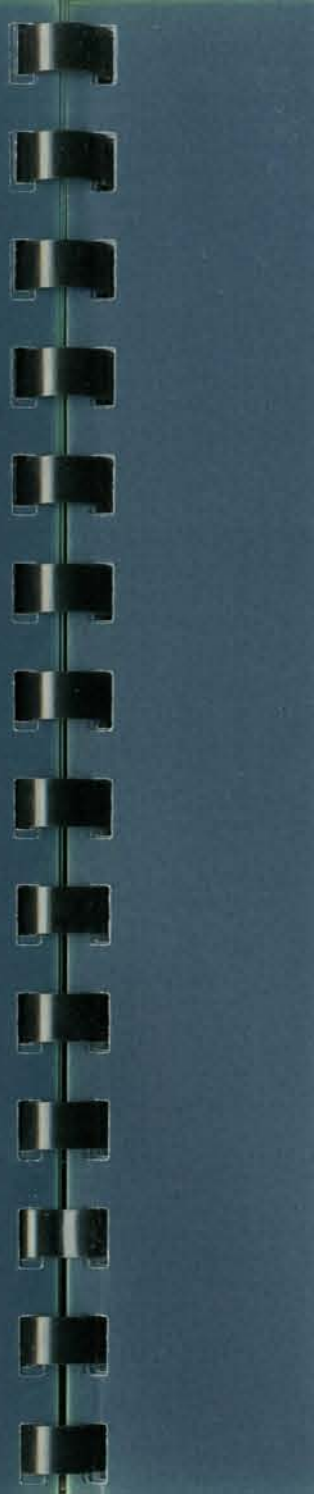
Crough Center (School of Architecture)



Columbus School of Law





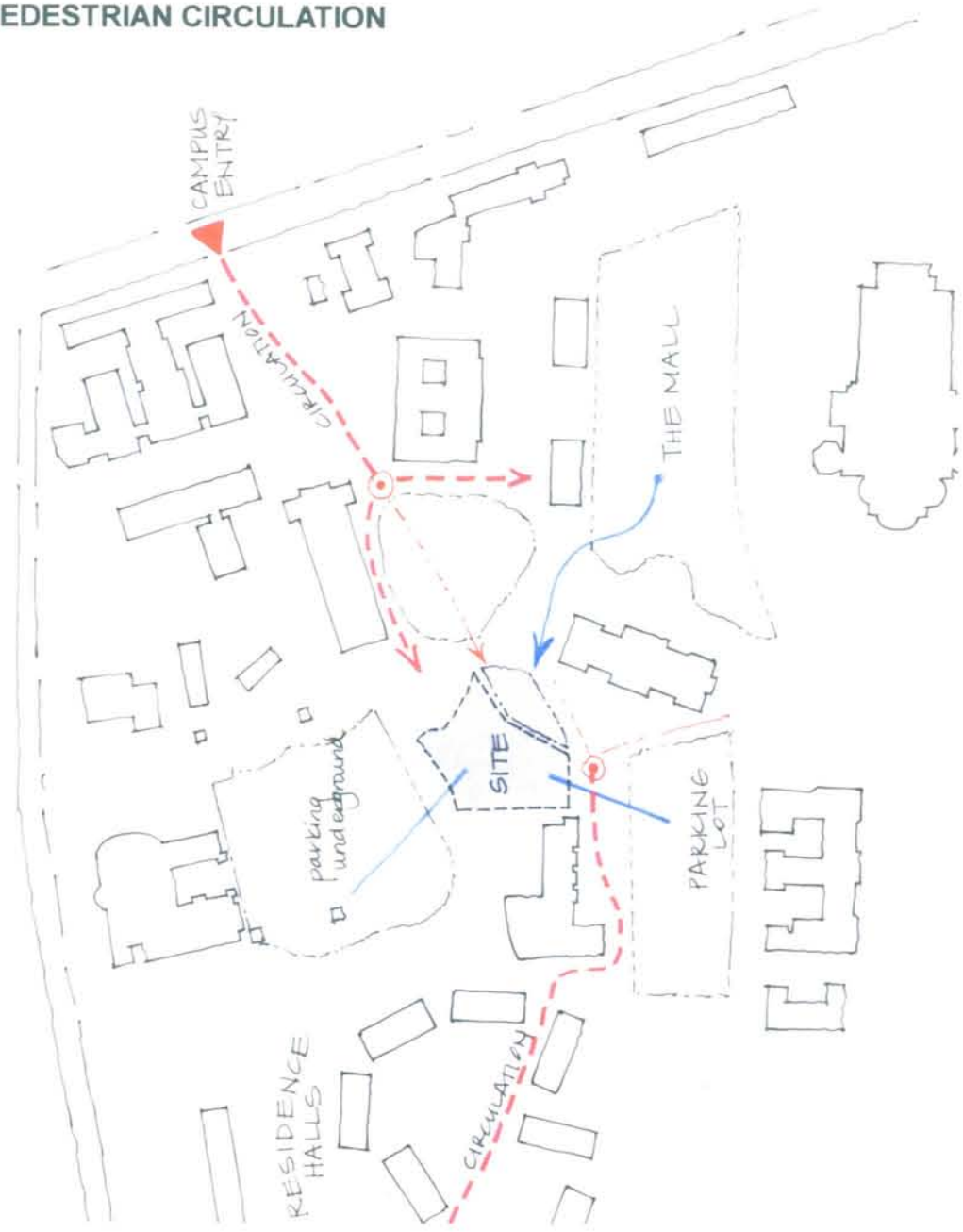




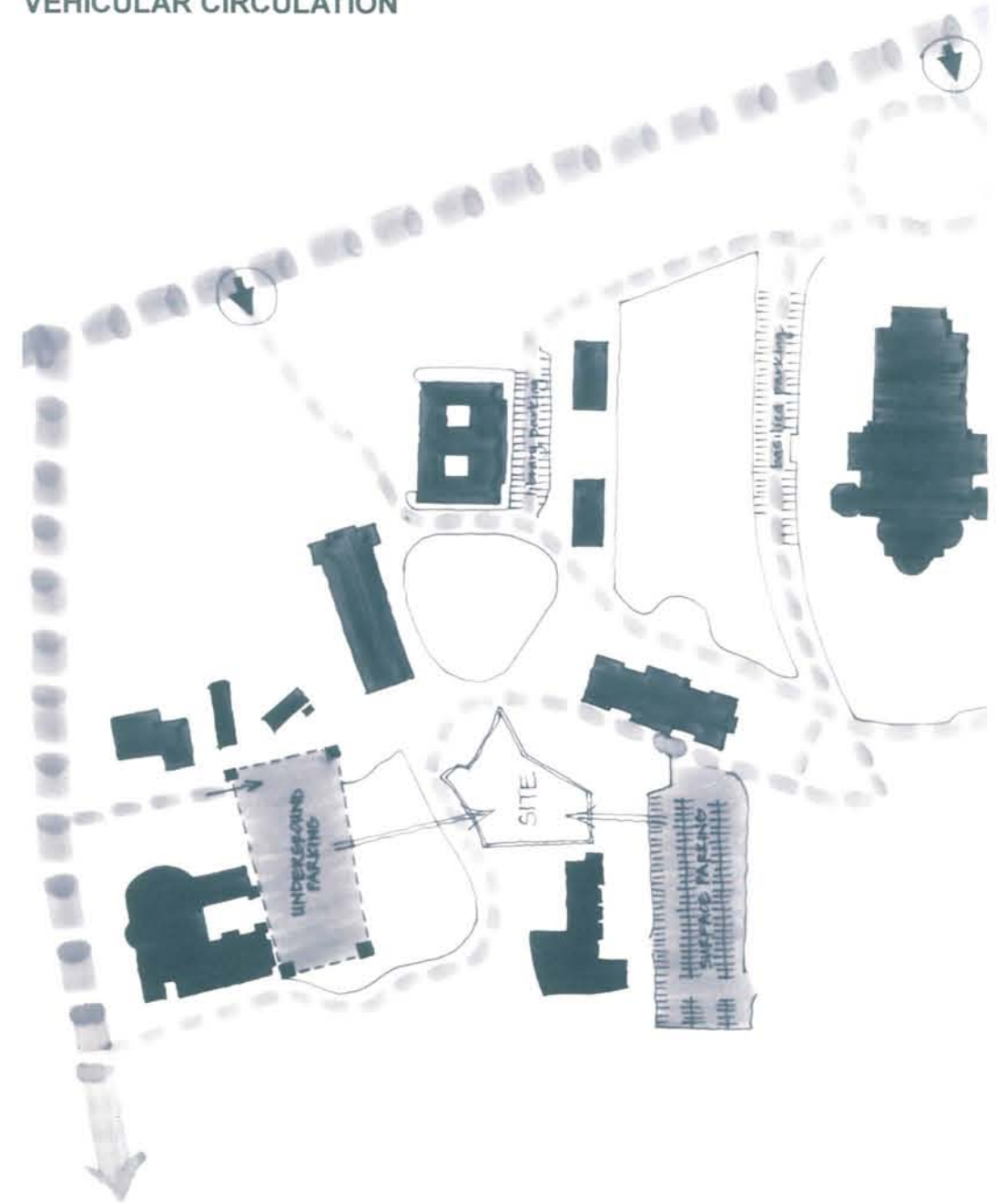




## PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

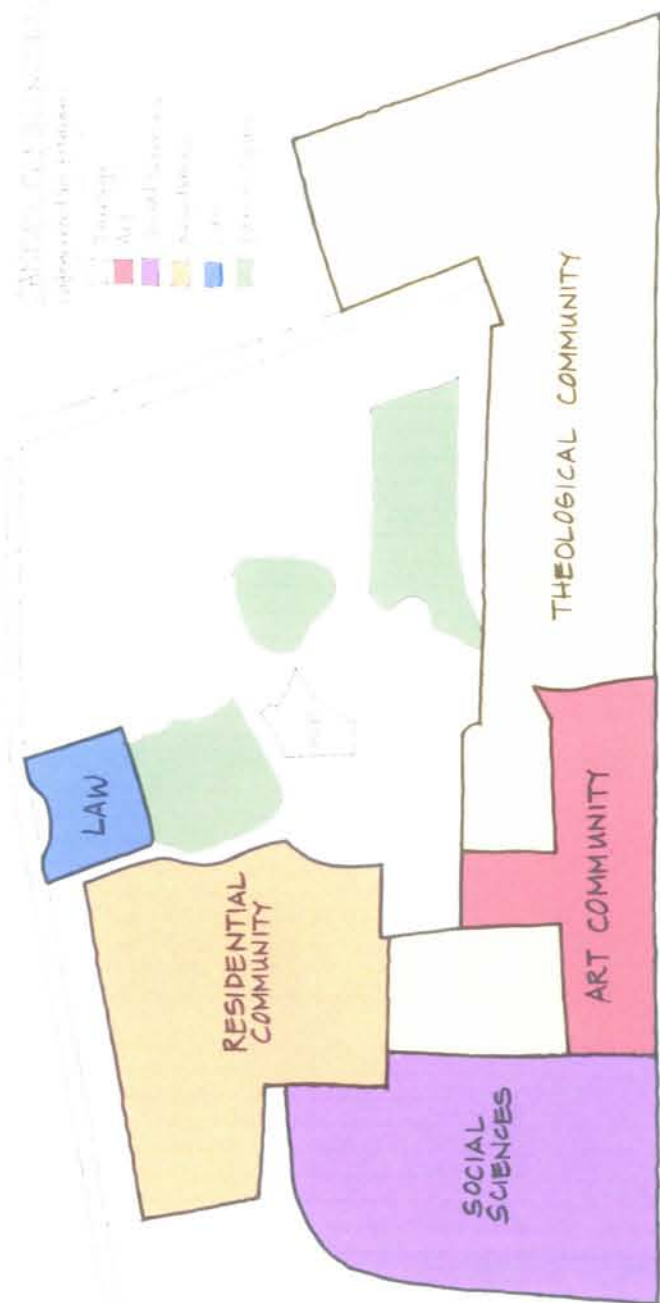


## VEHICULAR CIRCULATION





# PROGRAMMATIC COMMUNITIES





# PRECEDENTS



*"A great building is the greatest  
conceivable work of art..."*

--Henry James



## ARCHITECTURAL PRECEDENTS

### **Storefront for Art and Architecture**

(Steven Holl and Acconci Studio. New York City. 1993)

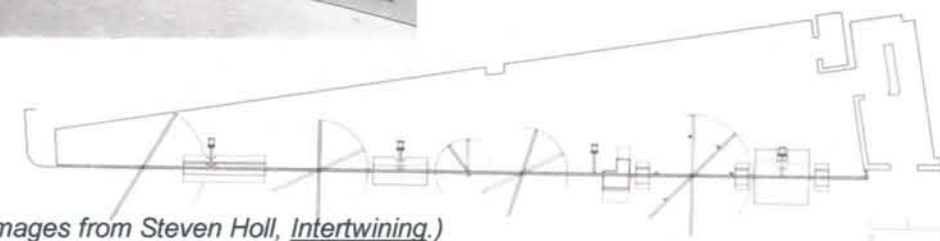
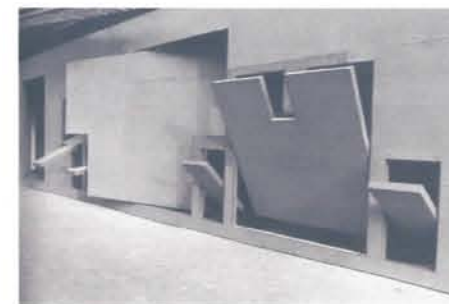
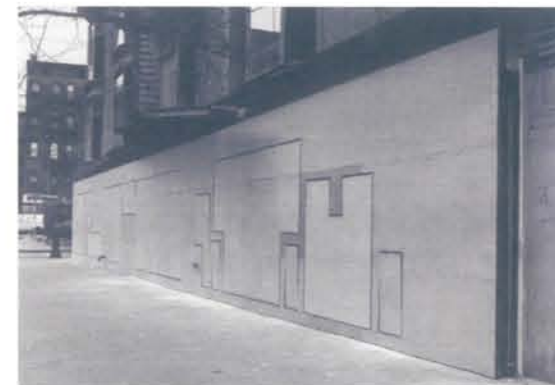
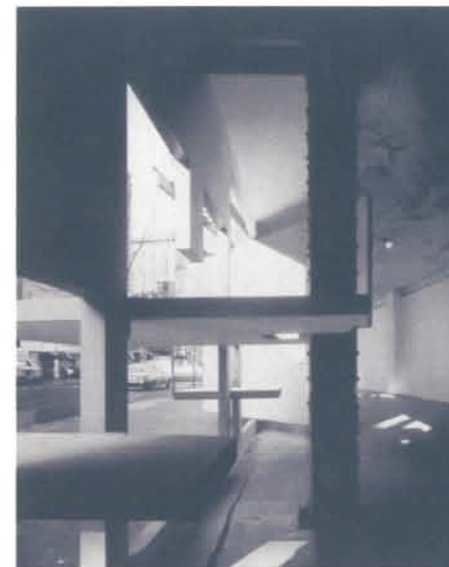
The Storefront for Art and Architecture is a façade renovation project for a small gallery located in New York City at the intersection of the Chinatown, Little Italy, and SoHo neighborhoods. The long façade is the most dominant structure of the small, narrow, wedge-shaped gallery that contains a triangular exhibition space. (Holl, p. 110)

The façade consists of a series of hinged panels arranged in a puzzle-like formation. The panels are moveable, creating an ever-changing façade of participatory walls. (Futagawa, p. 37) The façade becomes both a sculptural piece of art and a functional structure that people can sit on and use as benches. According to Vito Acconci, public art is characterized by the social spaces it creates. By creating a piece of art for public use, architecture is used as an instrument for interaction. (Finkelpearl, p. 182)

More importantly, the Storefront project encourages the merging of street/public and the so-called elite art world (Futagawa, p. 37) by pulling the sidewalk into the gallery and allowing the gallery to spill out into the street. (Finkelpearl, p. 176) The blurred boundary creates a back and forth relationship between inside and outside, and challenges the traditional function of a façade, which is to create a division that separates inside from outside. When the panels are open, the façade dissolves, expanding the gallery space to include the sidewalk. (Holl, p. 110)

The kinetic façade has a range of spatial possibilities that allows the exhibiting artists to shape the space rather than be shaped by the space. (Finkelpearl, p. 181) This idea was inspired by the history of past exhibits being marked by the cuts and layers of paint left by exhibiting artists. The fact that the gallery was always changing inspired Holl and Acconci to design a façade that represented the ever-changing non-permanence of the exhibits. (Holl, p. 110)

The Storefront project further departs from traditional gallery spaces by asking: Why aren't there any windows in museums? Is all art so fragile that it must be protected from the outside world? (Finkelpearl, p. 183) By creating a functional and sculptural façade that allows the city to infiltrate the gallery, the Storefront for Art and Architecture communicates with the public, provides the opportunity for the art within to communicate with the public, encourages public participation, and establishes an identity for the gallery.



(Images from Steven Holl, *Intertwining*.)



### **Wexner Center for the Arts**

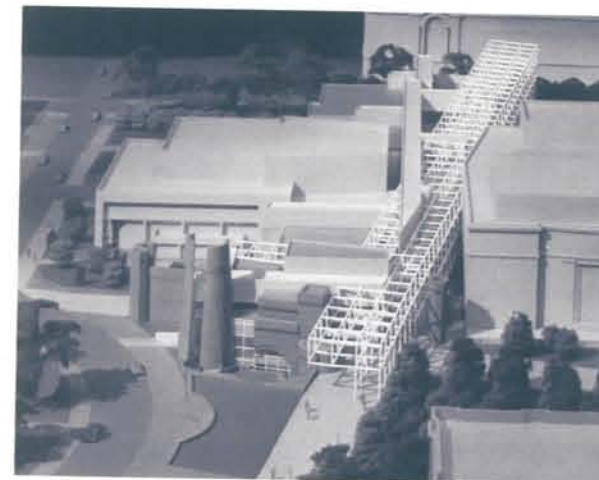
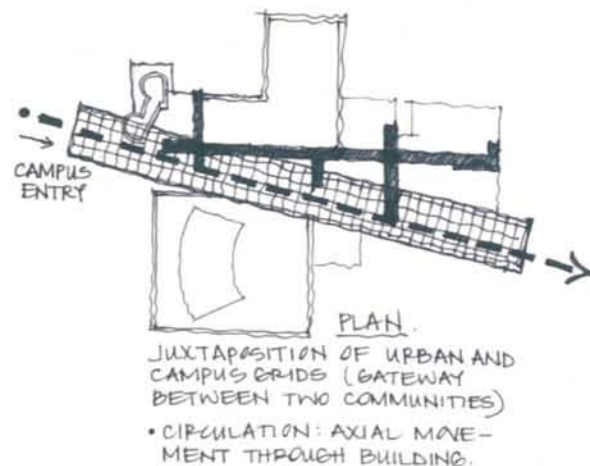
*(Peter Eisenmann. Columbus, Ohio. Ohio State University. 1983-89)*

In addition to its programmatic similarities to the thesis program, the Wexner Center for the Arts serves as a bridge between the Ohio State University community and the city of Columbus. Located at the entry point to the university campus, the Wexner Center incorporates both the city grid and the campus grid into its design encouraging a relationship between the two expressed through architectural form. *(Wexner)*

The axial atrium cuts through the entire complex creating a circulation path through the building. The atrium is expressed as a three-dimensional white gridded structure that resembles construction scaffolding. The scaffold is a symbol of construction in process and represents the artistic processes occurring within. Additionally, the axial scaffold-like atrium draws people into the building to experience and become part of the artistic process.

*(Wexner)*

The Wexner Center contains gallery space, studios, residences for live-in artists, and a theater space to house a community of artists. The building is also an expression of the history of the site, the towers becoming a distorted interpretation of the castle-like armory that used to be on the site. *(Wexner)* As a campus entry piece and metaphor for art in process, the Wexner Center is a symbol that gives identity to both the campus and the art community within it.



*(Images from Pippo Ciorra, Botta, Eisenmann, Gregotti, Hollein:musei.)*

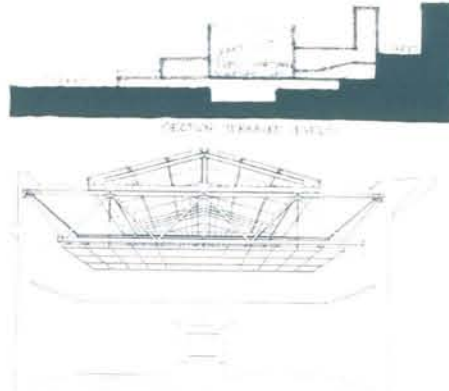


### Neue Staatsgalerie

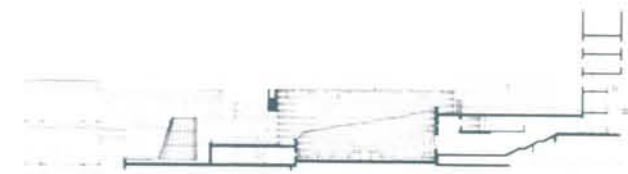
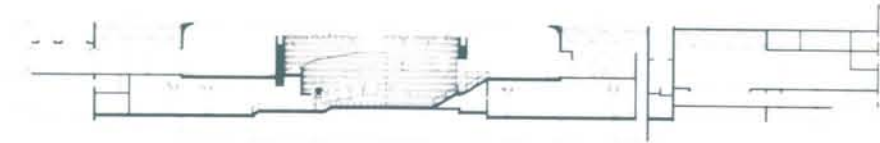
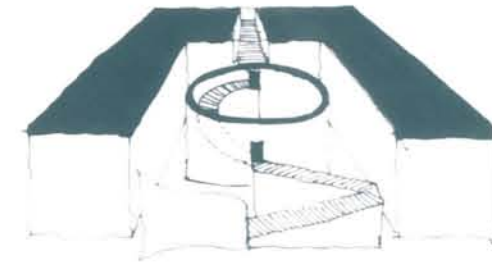
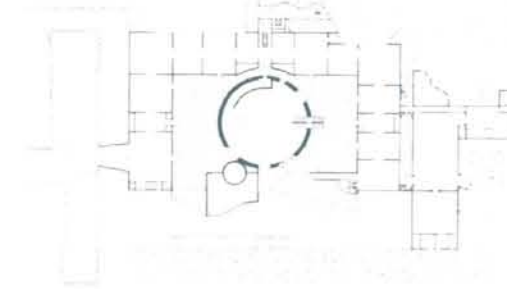
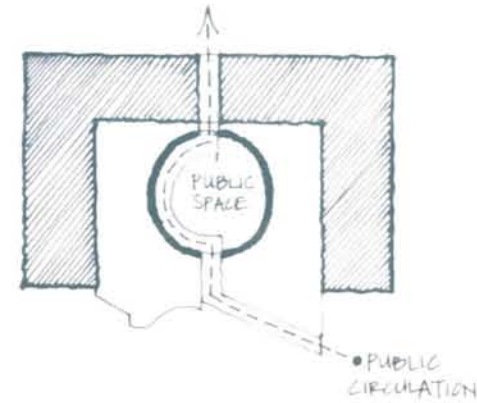
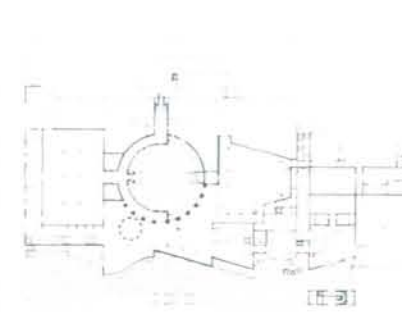
(James Stirling. Stuttgart, Germany. 1977-84)

James Stirling's Neue Staatsgalerie transformed the role and image of the museum in 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture from academic retreat to public space by encouraging a sense of participation in civic life. (Sudjic, p.165)

The central architectural element in the Neue Staatsgalerie is an exterior circular courtyard and sculpture court that serves as both outdoor public space and circulatory device in addition to its function as a display area. (Sudjic, p.160) By including public space in the museum's design, Stirling encourages public involvement.



The Neue Staatsgalerie is located on a sloped site with the museum connecting the two flanking streets at dramatically different elevations. The design of the museum is resolved sectionally by responding to the site through a series of terraced spaces. (Sudjic, p.168) Stirling's design addresses the public by including exterior pedestrian ramps that diagonally bisect the museum and move people sectionally through the site to connect the highway with the terraced street behind. The accessibility of the site allows the public to walk up and through the horizontally organized levels that create platforms from which to see and be seen, encouraging the interaction between people and architecture. (Steele, p.235) Additionally, Stirling's reference of a collage of architectural precedents establishes the Neue Staatsgalerie's identity and symbolizes the role of the museum as a collection of multiple styles, artists, and time periods.



(Images from James Steele, ed., *Museum Builders*.)



## Phoenix Solid Waste Management Facility and Recycling Center

(Linnea Glatt and Michael Singer. Phoenix, Arizona. 1993)

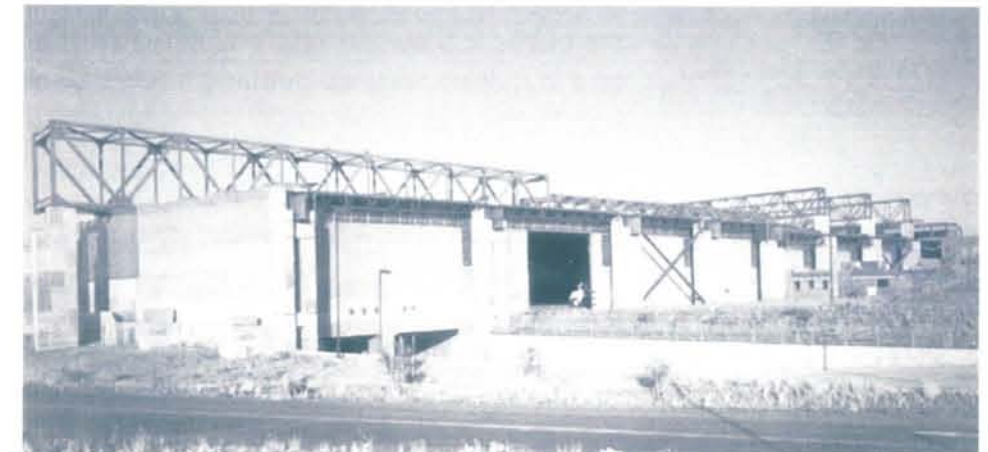
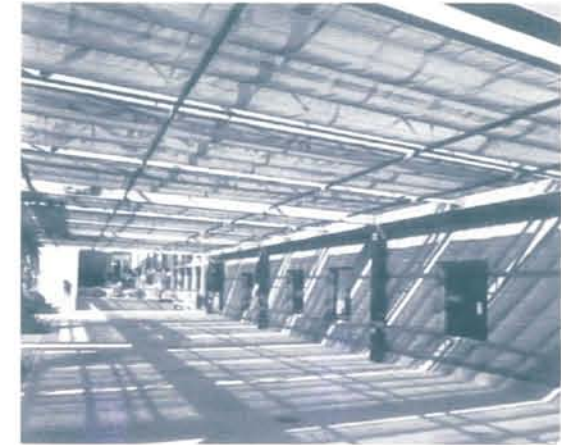
The Phoenix Solid Waste Management Facility and Recycling Center was designed by two artists who were originally commissioned as part of the Percent for Art Program. Linnea Glatt and Michael Singer wanted to humanize the entire building rather than insert a few art pieces, and ended up redesigning the 18 million dollar complex. (Finkelpearl, p.200) Glatt and Singer felt the original design concealed the function of the building, (Finkelpearl, p. 201) so they sought to transform the public's attitude about waste management by opening up the entire operation to public view. (Finkelpearl, 197) Their design eliminated the "out of site, out of mind" attitude about garbage (Finkelpearl, p.201) by bringing public visitors into direct contact with the recycling operation. (Finkelpearl, p.197)



In addition to waste management and recycling, the center contains classrooms, an amphitheater, and offices. Visitors come to the center to do more than just dump their garbage, as the building is used for educational purposes and also functions as a community center and hall for receptions and parties. (Finkelpearl, p.207) The community-oriented complex integrates the public and private functions of the building by allowing the public to view the waste treatment process and by encouraging public participation in recycling. (Finkelpearl, p.201)

The Phoenix Solid Waste Management Facility and Recycling Center is a good example of architecture encouraging community involvement in unlikely conditions. The building also reveals the process that is occurring inside. Community participation and visibility of process are both themes in public art and concepts to be explored in the design of the thesis project.

(Images from Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*.)





### Other Precedents

Three other architectural precedents that relate to the concepts explored in this thesis include La Meme Student Housing at the Medical Facility (1968-72) in Louvain, Belgium by Lucien Kroll, Byker Wall (1969-75) in Newcastle by Ralph Erskine, and the University of Porto School of Architecture (1986-96) in Porto, Portugal by Alvaro Siza.

La Meme and Byker Wall are both products of the participatory design movement that encouraged client participation in the making of buildings. In Lucien Kroll's student housing project, each student designed their own environment, resulting in a façade that resembles a patchwork quilt. The interiors of the dorm rooms were considered an open landscape that could be shaped by individual residents using clip-in walls. The students who were not interested in designing their own environment lived in a separate part of the building with a rigid nine-square "Facist" façade that eliminated any possibility of expressing individuality. Additionally, each of the work groups involved in the construction of the building was asked to create an art piece. The resultant HVAC sculptures and brickwork "tapestries" expressed the identity of all those who worked on the building and revealed the processes that went into its construction. (Henderson)

This building is the ultimate example of a community art project because its creation involved the collaborative efforts of multiple individuals and communities. The design process produced a building that is unique and individual to the students who participated in its design, and that communicates the identity of the community that lives there. Additionally, the patchwork façade expresses the individual identities of the residents. This building encourages a sense of community identity while allowing each part of the collective whole to retain its individuality.



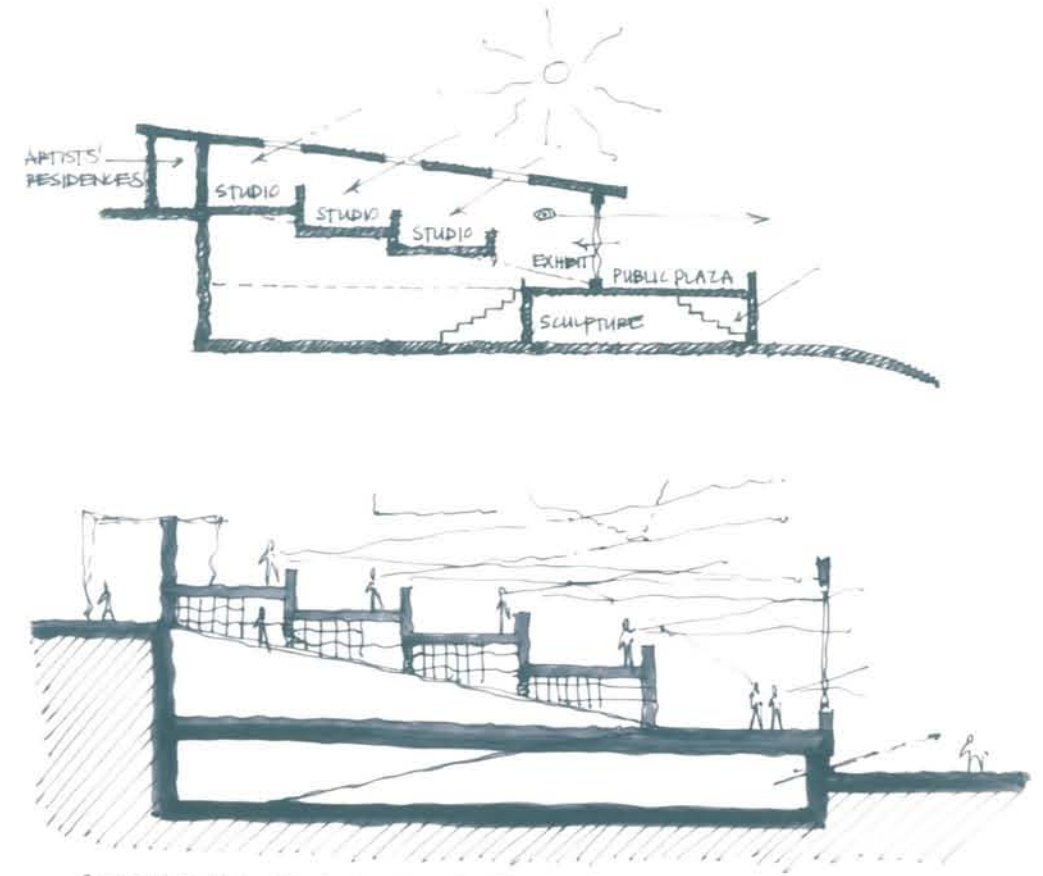
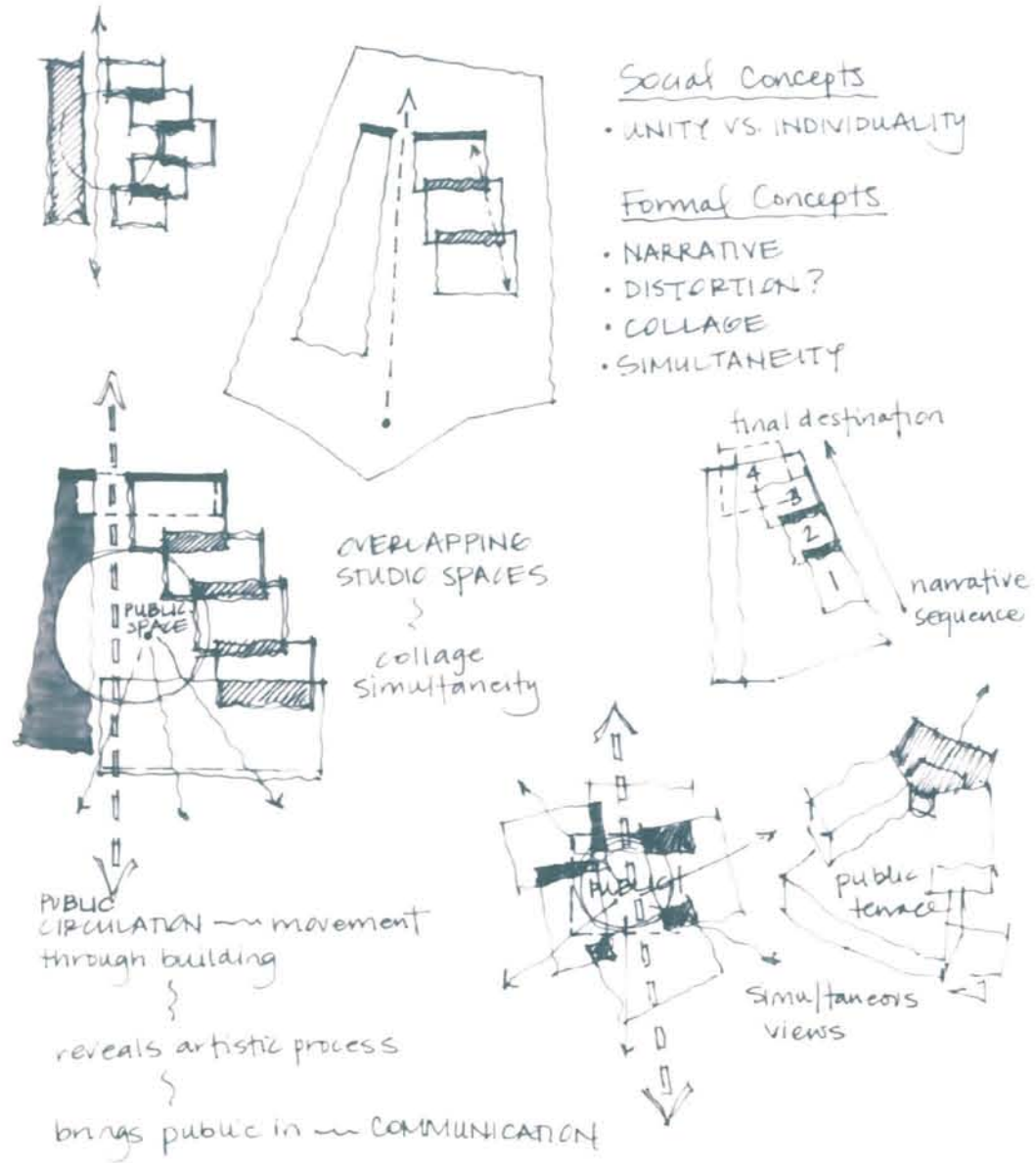
Ralph Erskine's Byker Wall is a multi-family housing project similar to Kroll's project. Byker Wall sought to establish a dialogue between community and architecture through large-scale participatory design. Erskine, a member of Team X, wanted to give the dwelling a sense of identity by including the future inhabitants as part of the design process. (W. Curtis, p. 591) Byker Wall encouraged a sense of community because the individual members were allowed to make decisions that shaped architectural form. (Henderson)

Alvaro Siza's design for the School of Architecture at the University of Porto is a complex of five buildings connected underground. The complex is organized around a large outdoor public plaza creating a gathering space for students. The axial plaza is also a circulatory device forcing students to move through and experience the space created by the surrounding buildings. The sectional design reveals an underground space below the plaza that unifies the five buildings.





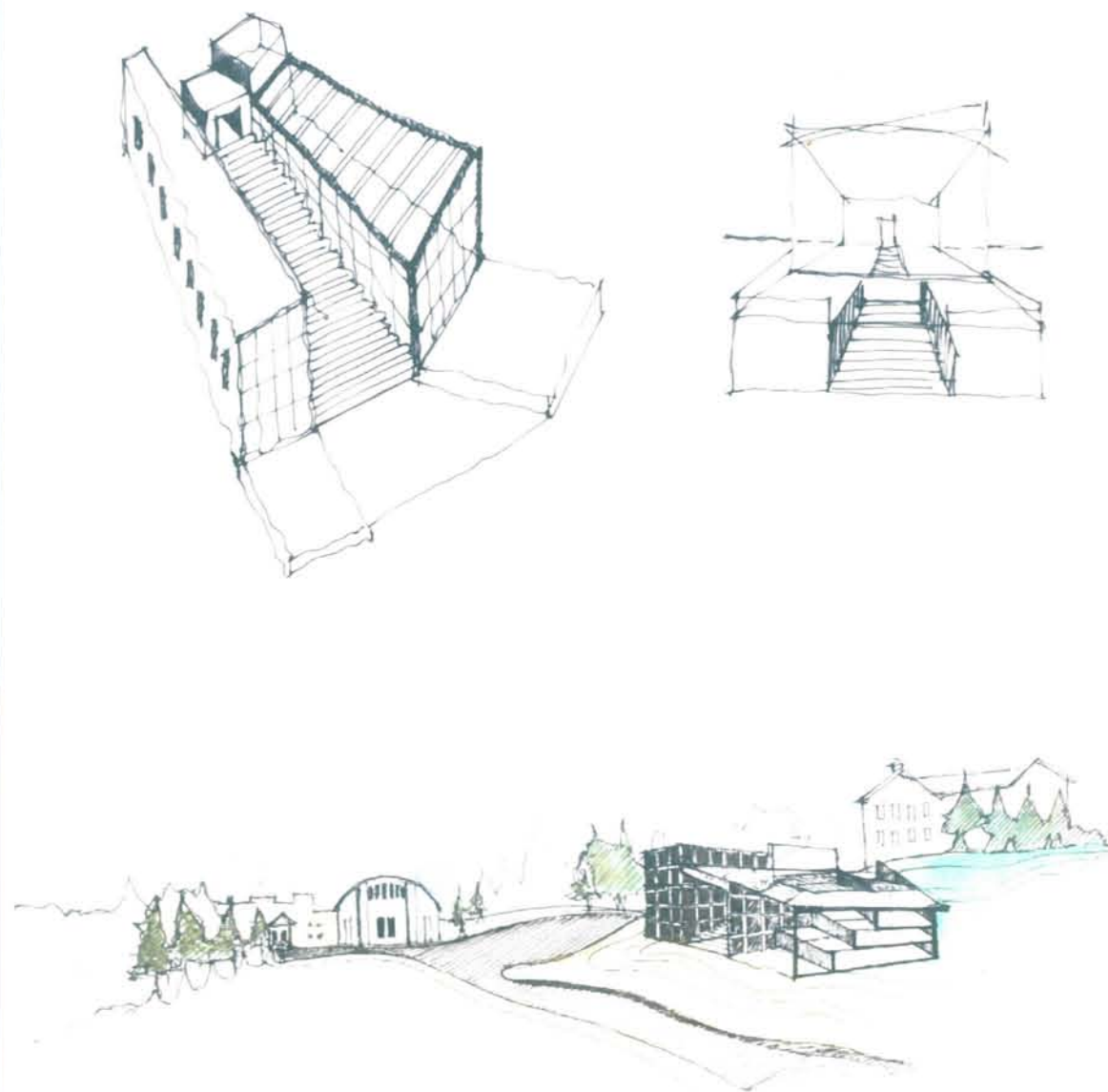
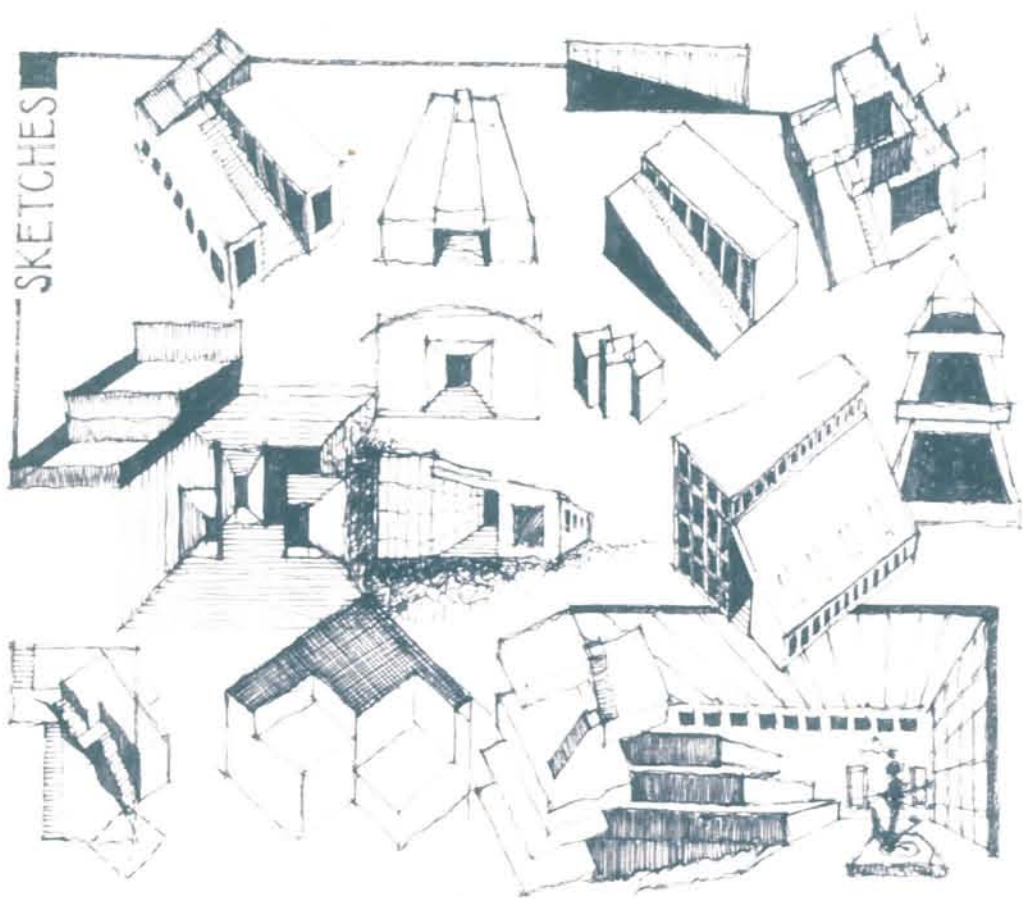
## PARTI STUDIES AND PRELIMINARY SKETCHES



### SECTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- building as circulatory device to move public through site sectionally
- terraced spaces
- ramps? stairs?







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